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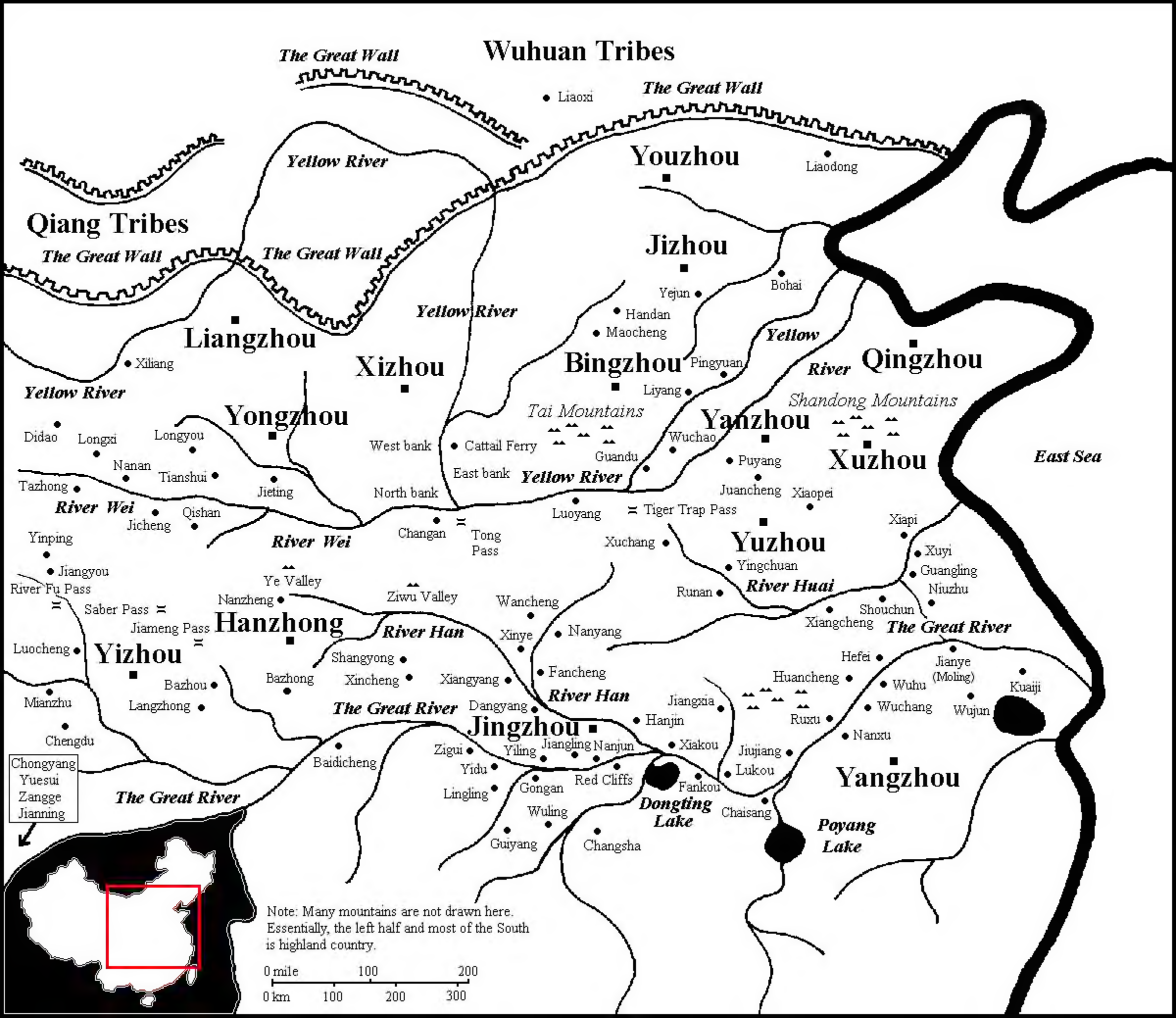
SANGOKUSHI

53

SIEGE OF CHENCANG

JIANG WEI
BOYUE

YOKOYAMA
MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

MAJOR CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI

CAI MAO:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU BIAO, WHO BECAME THE SUPREME ADMIRAL OF WEI'S NAVY WHEN JINGZHOU SURRENDERED TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE IS FRAMED BY ZHOU YU'S PLOT AND THUS EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. RISES TO BECOME KING OF WEI BUT DECLINES TO BECOME EMPEROR HIMSELF. PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS IN VOLUME 42.

CAO HONG:
YOUNGER COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL.

CAO PI:
CAO CAO'S ELDEST SON WHO SUCCEEDS TO KING OF WEI AND DETHRONES LAST HAN EMPEROR TO BECOME THE FIRST WEI EMPEROR. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

CAO RUI:
ELDEST SON OF CAO PI. SUCCEEDS AFTER HIS FATHER TO BECOME THE SECOND WEI EMPEROR.

CAO REN:
COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL. PORTRAYED AS BRAVE BUT HOT-TEMPERED IN THE STORY.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

CHENG YU:
IMPORTANT AND LOYAL STRATEGIST SERVING CAO CAO.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A MAID TO WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS AND SHE ROSE TO BECOME THE EMPRESS, UTILIZING RUTHLESS MEANS. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY DONG ZHUO WHEN HE CAME TO POWER.

FA ZHENG:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG, BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI DURING HIS CONQUEST OF SHU. HE IS ONE OF LIU BEI'S KEY STRATEGISTS.

GAN NING:
FORMER-PIRATE WHO IS NOW A FIRECE GENERAL OF WU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING, WHO WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO FOR KILLING HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON AS OF VOLUME 19. SERVES ALONGSIDE HIS FATHER UNTIL THEIR DEATH IN VOLUME 42.

GUAN XING:
GUAN YU'S SECOND SON, WHO BECOMES A PROMINENT SHU OFFICER AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. AFTER THE FAILED SIEGE ON FANCHENG, HE IS EVENTUALLY CAUGHT BY WU FORCES AND PROMPTLY EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

HE JIN:
ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER ROSE TO BECOME EMPRESS HE. HE IS KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS DURING THEIR POWER STRUGGLE IN VOLUME 3.

HUANG GAI:
LOYAL GENERAL OF WU, WHOSE FAMILY HAS SERVED THE SUN FAMILY FOR THREE GENERATIONS.

HUANG ZHONG:
AN ELDERLY WARRIOR GENERAL RENOWNED ESPECIALLY FOR HIS SKILL WITH THE BOW. FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT DEFECTS TO LIU BEI IN VOLUME 28. FALLS IN BATTLE AGAINST WU FORCES IN VOLUME 43.

HUA XIN:
WEI MINISTER WHO RISES TO BECOME CHANCELLOR OF WEI UNDER CAO PI'S REIGN.

JIANG QIN:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

JIANG WEI:
NATIVE OF JICHENG AND FAMED FOR BOTH HIS MENTAL AND MARTIAL PROWESS. ORIGINALLY SERVED WEI, BUT DEFECTED TO SHU IN VOLUME 51 AFTER KONGMING'S PLAN TURNED HIS WEI ALLIES AGAINST HIM.

JIA XU:
FORMER STRATEGIST OF ZHANG XIU, WHO PLOTTED A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, WHICH LEFT DIAN WEI DEAD. AS OF VOLUME 16, HE HAS DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR.

LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU BETRAYS THEM.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO SICKNESS IN VOLUME 22 AND THE CONSEQUENT SUCCESSION CRISIS ALLOWS CAO CAO TO TAKE OVER JINGZHOU.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A VIRTUOUS MAN, WHO CLAIMS DESCENT FROM EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. HE BECOMES AN EMPEROR AND ESTABLISHES A SUCCESOR-DYNASTY TO HAN IN VOLUME 43.

LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED UPON FIRST SIGHT BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21. HE IS UNFORTUNATELY EXECUTED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 43 AFTER DENYING AID TO GUAN YU.

LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO WHO TEMPORARILY LOSES HIS INHERITANCE OF JINGZHOU DUE TO CAI MAO'S PLOT. IN VOLUME 29, HE PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS AND THE RIGHTFUL OWNERSHIP OF JINGZHOU CONTINUES TO BE DEBATED BETWEEN SUN QUAN AND LIU BEI.

LIU ZHANG:
INCOMPETENT RULER OF SHU (ALTERNATIVE NAME FOR YIZHOU). HE SEEKS LIU BEI'S HELP TO FEND OFF ZHANG LU, BUT RELATIONS SOON SOUR AND LIU BEI USURPS HIS RULE OVER SHU. AS OF VOLUME 35, HE IS EXILED TO JINGZHOU.

LU BU:
ALTHOUGH REPUTED TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR, HE IS HOT-HEADED AND RARELY HEEDS WISE ADVICE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES, AND EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

LU MENG:
FIRECE WU GENERAL, WHO AT LAST CONQUERS JINGZHOU FOR SUN QUAN, CAPTURING GUAN YU IN DOING SO. UNFORTUNATELY DIES TO A SUDDEN ILLNESS AFTER GUAN YU'S EXECUTION IN VOLUME 42, CAUSING SOME TO THINK HE WAS CURSED.

LU SU:
IMPORTANT MILITARY GENERAL AND ADVISOR OF WU.

LU XUN:
TALENTED WU OFFICIAL WHO QUICKLY RISES TO FAVOUR AFTER SUCCESSFULLY PLANNING THE CONQUEST OF JINGZHOU.

MA CHAO:
ONE OF THE FIVE TIGER GENERALS OF SHU, WHO ONCE SOUGHT TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S DEATH AT CAO CAO'S HANDS BEFORE ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE IN VOLUME 35. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

MA DAI:
A NEPHEW OF MA CHAO WHO ENTERS LIU BEI'S SERVICE ALONGSIDE HIS UNCLE.

MA LIANG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. HE IS THE FOURTH YOUNGEST OF THE FIVE MA BROTHERS, AND IS NOTED FOR HIS INTELLECT AND WHITE EYEBROWS. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 46.

MA SU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF MA LIANG, WHO, UPON REPORTING THE PASSING OF MA LIANG, CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF KONGMING AND ASSISTED THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS. HE HAS SINCE BECOME AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIST OF SHU.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO, WHO SIGNED THE BLOOD-PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 30, HE IS EXECUTED FOR A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF CAO CAO.

MENG DA:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG WHO DEFECTS TO LIU BEI, ALONG WITH HIS GOOD FRIENDS ZHANG SONG AND FA ZHENG. HE LATER DEFECTS TO WEI IN VOLUME 43, AFTER REALIZING HE WOULD BE KILLED IN SHU TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR GUAN YU'S DEATH.

MENG HUO:
KING OF THE NANMAN TRIBES, WHO UNSUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTED A REVOLT IN SOUTHERN SHU. KONGMING'S SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS WERE LAUNCHED IN RETALIATION. AFTER BEING CAPTURED AND RELEASED 7 TIMES, HE SURRENDERS AND BECOMES A LOYAL SUBJECT TO SHU.

MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

PANG DE:
FIERCE GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED MA TENG AND THEN MA CHAO. IN VOLUME 36, HE DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SERVICE DUE TO A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH ZHANG LU, THE LORD OF HANZHONG. PERISHES IN THE BATTLE OF FANCHENG AGAINST GUAN YU IN VOLUME 41.

PANG TONG SHIYUAN:
NICKNAMED THE YOUNG PHOENIX (FENGCHU), HE IS A MASTERFUL STRATEGIST SAID TO BE ZHUGE LIANG'S EQUAL. AFTER ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE, HE TRAGICALLY MET AN EARLY DEATH IN SHU WHEN AMBUSHED BY ZHANG REN IN VOLUME 34.

SIMA YI ZHONGDA:
IMPORTANT MILITARY STRATEGIST OF WEI SINCE CAO CAO'S REIGN. UPON CAO RUI'S SUCCESSION TO THE WEI THRONE, HE WAS BRIEFLY FRAMED FOR TREASON BY ZHUGE LIANG, BUT WAS RESTORED TO POWER IN LIGHT OF THE GROWING CRISIS OF ZHUGE LIANG'S NORTHERN CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEI.

SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN, WHO TURNS THE SUN FAMILY'S FORTUNE AROUND WITH HIS CONQUEST OF THE SOUTH-LANDS. IN VOLUME 19, A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AND CONFLICT WITH YU JI CAUSES HIS BODY AND MENTAL HEALTH TO WEAKEN. HE SUCCUMBS TO DEATH SHORTLY AFTER.

SUN JIAN:
THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. HOWEVER, HIS ALLIES LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO TO TURN ON HIM WHEN HE TRIES TO KEEP THE IMPERIAL SEAL FOR HIMSELF. IN VOLUME 7, HE IS KILLED IN BATTLE AGAINST YUAN SHAO.

SUN QIAN:
TRUSTED ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE AND THE CURRENT RULER OF WU, THE SOUTHLANDS OF CHINA.

TAISHI CI:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU YAO BUT DEFECTED TO SUN CE IN VOLUME 11. DURING THE BATTLE OF HEFEI (VOL. 29), HE FALLS PREY TO ZHANG LIAO'S PLAN AND IS KILLED IN BATTLE.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG. UPON HIS DEATH, HE BEQUEATHS XUZHOU TO LIU BEI.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY WERE KILLED DURING THE POWER STRUGGLE WITH HE JIN IN VOLUME 4.

WANG YUN:
THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN THE IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHAN IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEI YAN:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT HAS DEFECTED TO LIU BEI ALONG WITH HUANG ZHONG IN VOLUME 28.

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED BODYGUARD OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVICE TO LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).

XUN YU:
TALENTED ADVISOR TO CA CAO.

XU HUANG:
CALM AND COLLECTED GENERAL UNDER SERVICE TO CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.

YAN YAN:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU ZHANG BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI AFTER HIS CAPTURE AT ZHANG FEI'S HANDS IN VOLUME 34. HE IS NOTED FOR HIS ENERGY DESPITE HIS OLD AGE.

YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE DEFEATED.

YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.

ZHANG BAO:
ELDEST SON OF ZHANG FEI, WHO RISES TO PROMINENCE AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU. HIS TEMPER EVENTUALLY GETS THE BETTER OF HIM, WHEN HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS SUBORDINATES IN VOLUME 43.

ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.

ZHANG LU:
THE LEADER OF THE CELESTIAL MASTERS TAOIST MOVEMENT, AND THE RULER OF HANZHONG. IN VOLUME 36, CAO CAO CONQUERS HANZHONG BUT SPARES ZHANG LU.

ZHANG REN:
ONE OF SHU'S MOST CAPABLE GENERALS WHO PLANNED THE AMBUSH THAT KILLED PANG TONG. HE REFUSED TO SERVE LIU BEI UNLIKE MANY OF HIS COMRADES AND WAS THUS EXECUTED WHEN FINALLY CAPTURED AT THE HANDS OF ZHUGE LIANG (VOLUME 35).

ZHANG SONG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU ZHANG WHO, UPON FAILING TO MAKE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN CAO CAO AND LIU ZHANG, SOUGHT LIU BEI'S SUPPORT AND SWITCHED HIS ALLEGIANCE. IN VOLUME 34, HE IS EXECUTED WHEN HIS BROTHER REPORTS HIS BETRAYAL TO LIU ZHANG.

ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER SUBJECT OF YUAN SHAO BUT LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE BECOMES ONE OF LIU BEI'S MOST TRUSTED GENERALS.

ZHOU TAI:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

ZHANG ZHAO:
ELDER STATESMAN AND SUN QUAN'S TRUSTED ADVISOR. HE ORIGINALLY ENTERED SUN CE'S SERVICE ALONG WITH ZHANG HONG, WITH WHOM HE WAS REFERRED TO AS THE "TWO ZHANGS."

ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE. COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER LEARNING GUAN YU WAS EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

ZHOU YU GONGJIN:
SWORN BROTHER OF SUN CE, AND ONE OF WU'S TOP MINDS, SERVING AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DURING THE BATTLE OF THE RED CLIFFS. HE RECEIVES A CRITICAL ARROW-WOUND DURING HIS NANJUN CAMPAIGN (VOL. 27) WHICH HE NEVER FULLY RECOVERS FROM, LEADING TO HIS TRAGIC EARLY DEATH IN VOLUME 30.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

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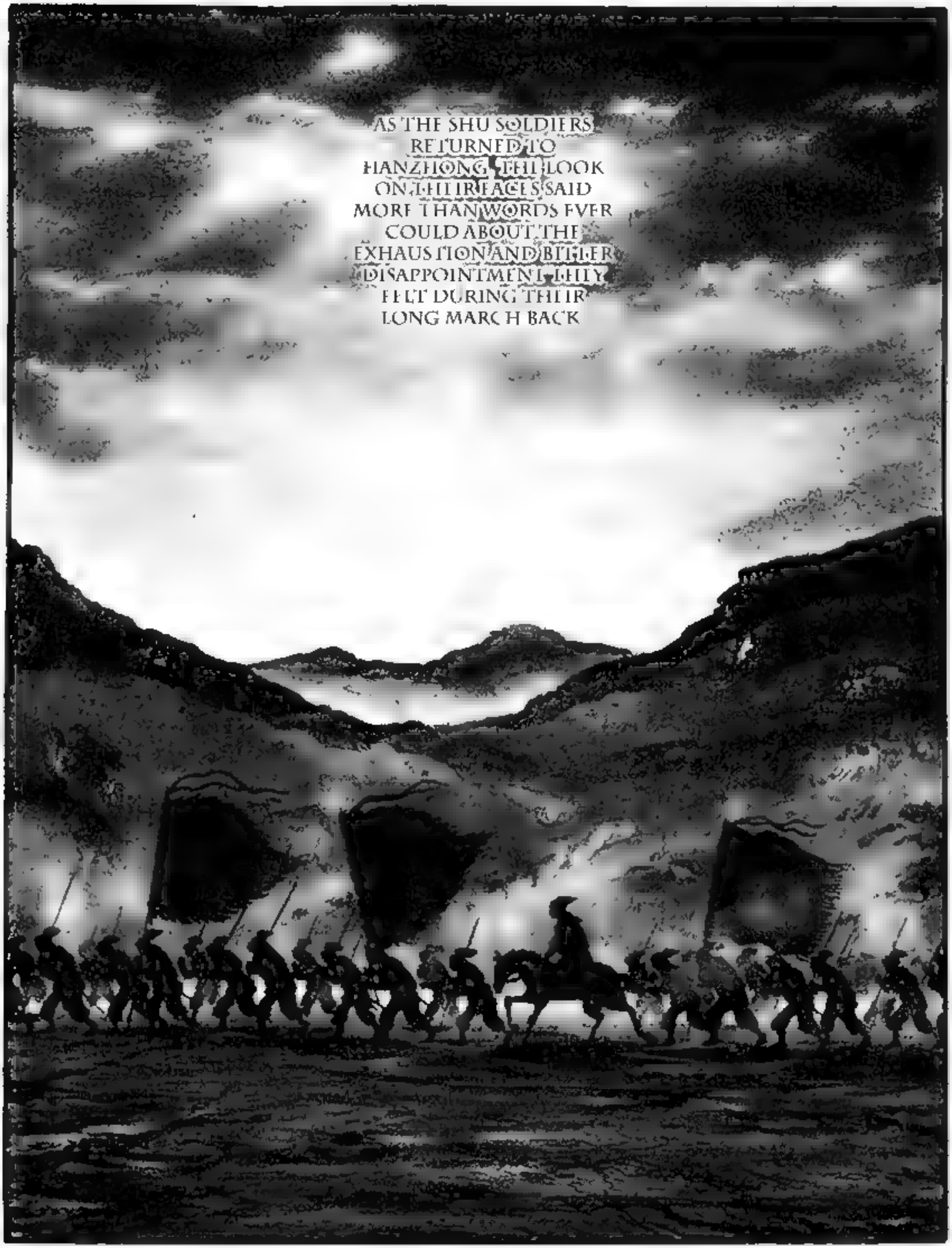
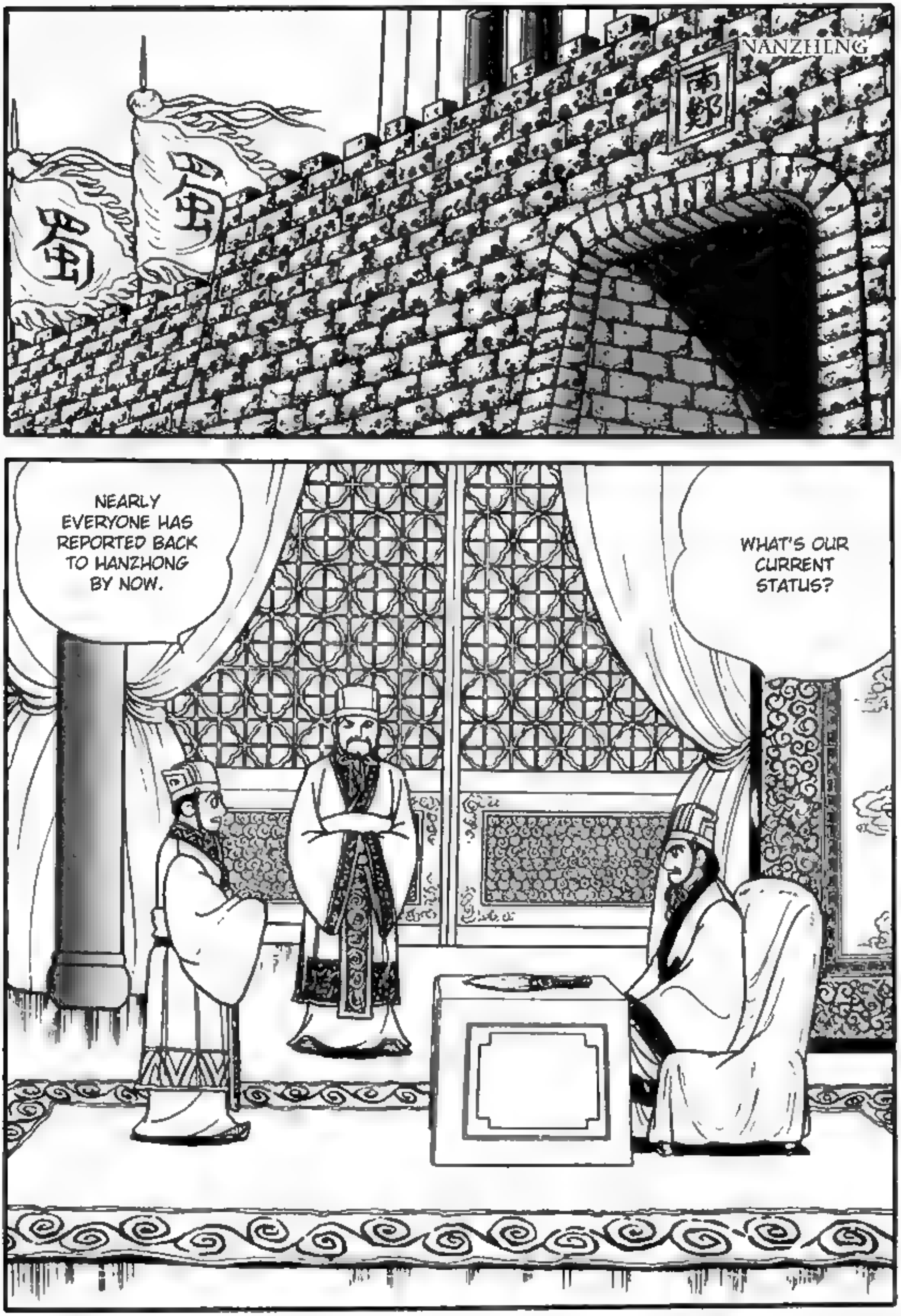
TEARFUL EXECUTION




NANZHENG
南鄭
NEARLY EVERYONE HAS REPORTED BACK TO HANZHONG BY NOW.
WHAT'S OUR CURRENT STATUS?

I SEE... SO THEY'RE STILL NOT BACK...

ONLY ZHAO ZILONG AND DENG ZHI HAVE YET TO RETURN.

ZHAO ZILONG SAID HE WOULD PERSONALLY SECURE THE REAR, AND HE IS A MAN OF HIS WORDS...

I PRAY THEY WERE ABLE TO WITHDRAW SAFELY.

MA SU MAY STILL YET BECOME AN IMPORTANT FIGURE FOR OUR EMPIRE, BUT HIS CRIME IS TOO HEAVY TO FORGIVE...

TO THINK THAT OUR GREAT ARMY ADVANCING RAPIDLY INTO WEI LANDS WOULD BE FORCED TO TURN AROUND DUE TO A SINGLE BLUNDER...

IS HE SAFE!?

CHANCELLOR! GENERAL ZHAO ZILONG'S FORCES HAVE RETURNED!

AHH!

ZHAO ZILONG AND DENG ZHI REPORTING IN, CHANCELLOR.

?

YOUR DEEDS REQUIRE AN APPROPRIATE REWARD.

THANK THE HEAVENS YOU'VE RETURNED SAFELY. I WAS QUITE SHOCKED WHEN YOUR MESSENGER REPORTED DENG ZHI WAS LEADING THE RETREAT WHILE YOU INSISTED ON SECURING THE REAR. YOU ARE TRULY THE EMBODIMENT OF MARTIAL VALOUR.

HOLD ON, SIR.

HOW DOES 50 CATTIES OF GOLD AND 10,000 ROLLS OF SILK SOUND?

IF YOU MUST GIVE OUT VALUABLES, PLEASE GIVE A LITTLE TO EACH AND EVERY MAN IN THE ARMY DURING THE COMING WINTER SO THAT NONE WILL UNDERGO FURTHER HARDSHIPS.

THE CAMPAIGN ENDED IN FAILURE AND ALL THREE ARMIES RETREATED FROM WEI LANDS. HOW CAN AN OFFICER BE REWARDED IN A DEFEAT? IF YOU INSIST ON REWARDING ME, SUCH AN ACT OF INCONGRUENCY WILL CAUSE OTHERS TO THINK THE CHANCELLOR DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO UPHOLD A FAIR SYSTEM OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

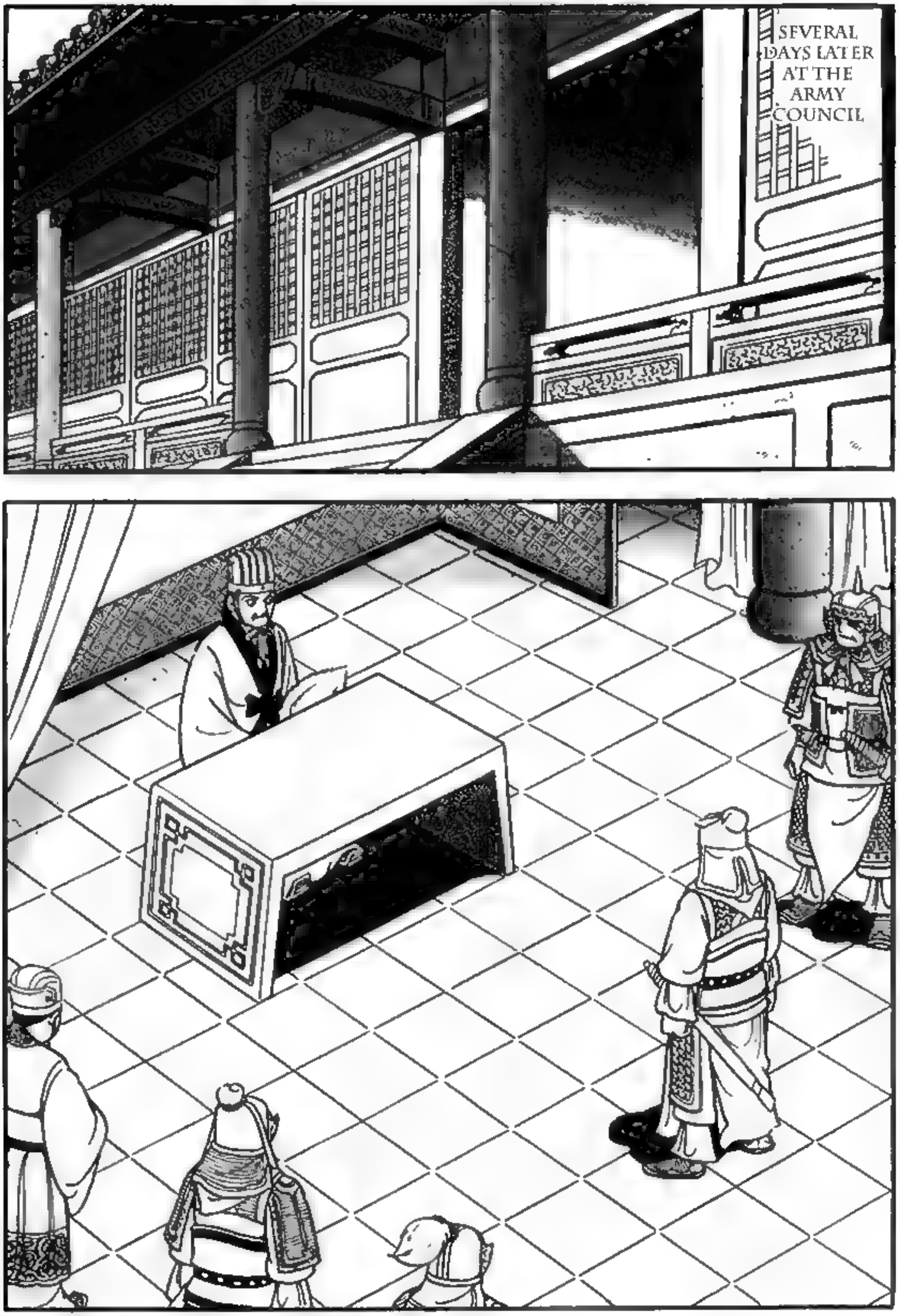
IF YOU INSIST, GENERAL.

YES, SIR.

YOU MAY NOW RETIRE FOR THE DAY AND REST.

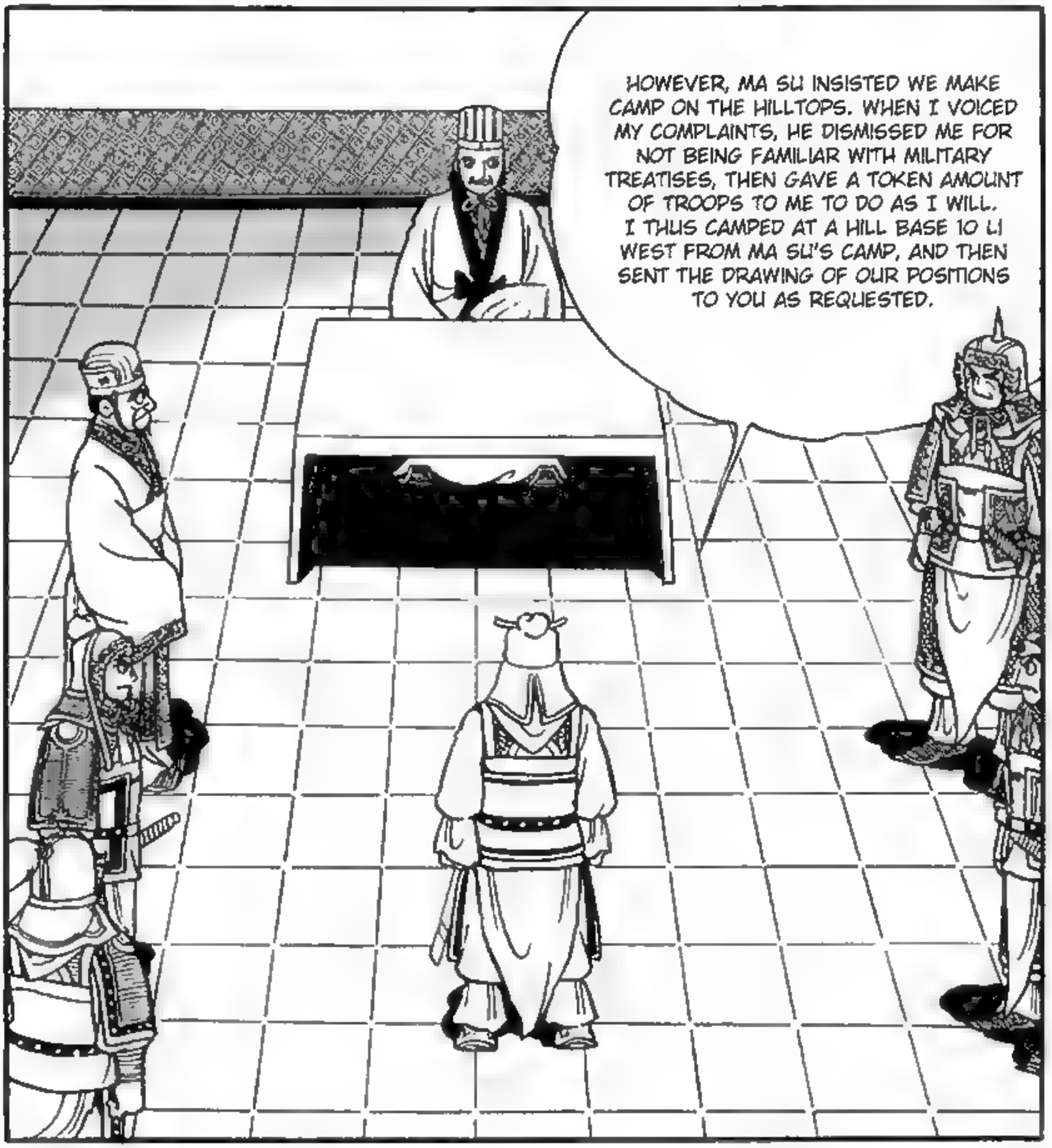
THOSE SOLEMN WORDS CAUSED KONGMING TO RECALL LIU BEI'S FREQUENT EXTOLLMENT OF ZHAO ZILONG'S VIRTUES

AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, ZHAO ZILONG'S STERN WORDS REMINDED KONGMING THAT MA SU'S PUNISHMENT COULD NOT BE LIGHT


SEVERAL DAYS LATER AT THE ARMY COUNCIL

JUST AS YOU STRESSED, I ADVISED MA SU WE SHOULD BLOCK OFF ALL THE ROADS AT JIETING UPON ARRIVING THERE.

WANG PING, AS THE SECOND-IN-COMMAND TO MA SU, PLEASE REPORT WHAT OCCURRED AT JIETING.


HOWEVER, MA SU INSISTED WE MAKE CAMP ON THE HILLTOPS. WHEN I VOICED MY COMPLAINTS, HE DISMISSED ME FOR NOT BEING FAMILIAR WITH MILITARY TREATISES, THEN GAVE A TOKEN AMOUNT OF TROOPS TO ME TO DO AS I WILL. I THUS CAMPED AT A HILL BASE 10 LI WEST FROM MA SU'S CAMP, AND THEN SENT THE DRAWING OF OUR POSITIONS TO YOU AS REQUESTED.

OUR ACTIONS AFTERWARDS CAN BEST BE HEARD FROM WEI YAN, WHO TOOK CHARGE. DESPITE THE LOSS, I BELIEVE I ACTED AS FAITHFULLY TO THE CHANCELLOR'S ORDERS AS I COULD WITH MY GIVEN AUTHORITY.

WITH THE ENEMIES CONTROLLING THE ROADS OF JIETING, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR WEI YAN AND GAO XIANG TO OVERTURN THIS ADVANTAGE.

WHEN THE LARGER WEI ARMY STORMED INTO JIETING, MY PALTRY FORCE OF 5000 TROOPS WERE EASILY KEPT AWAY FROM ASSISTING MA SU. MEANWHILE, MA SU'S CAMP WAS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED TO CUT OFF THEIR ACCESS TO WATER, LEADING TO HIS DEFEAT.

VERY WELL, YOU MAY NOW STEP BACK.

YES, SIR.

CALL MA SU FORWARD.

MA SU, ENTER!

BEFORE YOU SET OUT, I STRESSED OVER AND OVER AGAIN HOW IMPORTANT JIETING WAS, THAT YOUR DEFENSE OF JIETING COULD ALLOW YOU TO CLAIM THE GREATEST CREDIT IF WE CAPTURED CHANG'AN.

FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD, YOU HAVE DEDICATED YOUR STUDIES TO THE CLASSICS AND MILITARY TREATISES. I PLACED GREAT HOPES IN YOUR TALENT, WHICH IS WHY I ASSIGNED YOU TO THE CRITICAL POST AT JIETING.

MA SU!

HOWEVER, YOU FAILED TO HEED MY ADVICE AND MADE AN IRREVERSIBLE BLUNDER.

I MISJUDGED YOUR TALENTS, FOR YOU'VE REVEALED YOUR INCOMPETENCE DURING THIS MISSION.

YES, SIR...

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT WANG PING REPORTED, BUT AGAINST THE ENEMY'S SHEER NUMBERS, THERE WAS LITTLE I COULD DO.

EVEN WITH ONLY 5000 SOLDIERS, WANG PING FOUGHT BRAVELY AND KEPT THE ENEMIES WARY ON THEIR TOES.

SILENCE!

IN MY DEFENSE, THE MILITARY TREATISES TELL US THAT HOLDING THE HIGH GROUND ALLOWS ONE'S FORCE TO CLEAVE THE ENEMY LIKE AN AXE SWINGING DOWNWARDS AT A LOG.
YOU, HOWEVER, REJECTED WANG PING'S SOUND ADVICE AND CAMPED IN THE MOST ABSURD LOCATION.
YOU ARE A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF ONE WHO LEARNS MUCH BUT KNOWS NOT WHEN AND HOW TO APPLY THEM...
YOU FOOL!
MA SU, YOUR FOLLY AND IMPATIENCE HAVE CAUSED THE IGNOMINIOUS DEFEAT AND RETREAT OF OUR ARMIES. FOR THESE HEAVY CRIMES, I... I SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH!

YOU HAVE MY WORD THAT YOUR FAMILY WILL BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF.

I WAS ALREADY PREPARED FOR DEATH. IF THE GREATER GOOD IS SERVED BY MY EXECUTION, I ACCEPT IT UNGRUDGINGLY, BEARING NO HATRED.

TAKE THIS MAN OUT AND EXECUTE HIM WITH ACCORDANCE TO MILITARY LAW.

CHANCELLOR, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GUIDANCE AND TEACHINGS UNTIL NOW.

COME, MA SU.

.....

IN THIS AGE OF CHAOS, A MAN LIKE MA SU MUST NOT BE WASTED. DESPITE HIS FOOLISH MISTAKE, EXECUTING HIM NOW WILL BE A GREAT LOSS FOR SHU.

CHANCELLOR, PLEASE WAIT.

IN ANCIENT TIMES, SUN TZU WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE VICTORIES FOR HE MADE LAWS CLEAR AND ANSWERABLE BY ALL. IN OUR CURRENT ERA, WHEN THE REALM IS FRAGMENTED AND REBELS ROAM FREE, IF WE ARE LAX WITH OUR LAWS, WE CANNOT HOPE TO BUILD A DISCIPLINED ARMY.

JIANG WANG, YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW WHY THIS MUST BE SO.

IT IS PRECISELY WHEN ONE WISHES TO IGNORE THE LAW THAT THE LAW MUST BE APPLIED SO THAT ORDER CAN OVERCOME INSTABILITY IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD.

TO LET ONE'S PERSONAL EMOTIONS GET IN THE WAY OF UPHOLDING THE LAW IS THE BIGGEST CRIME, FAR OUTWEIGHING EVEN MA SU'S ERROR.

EVEN SO... MA SU SHOWED SO MANY PROMISE IN OTHER AREAS. HIS LOSS IS DEEPLY REGRETTABLE.

.....

BUT THE INITIAL FAULT LIES WITH ME FOR MISJUDGING HIS ABILITY.

KONGMING WEPT DEARLY AT THE SIGHT OF MA SU S HEAD

MA SU WAS EXECUTED IN THE 5TH MONTH OF THE 6TH YEAR OF BEGINNING PROSPERITY (228 AD)

BEFORE BEING SEWN BACK TO THE BODY FOR A PROPER FUNERAL AS KONGMING PROMISED, MA SU S FAMILY WERE ALL WELL TAKEN CARE OF AFTER HIS DEATH

THE HEAD WAS POSTED ON THE GROUNDS FOR ALL TO SEE FOR SOME DAYS.

MEAN WHILE, SIMA YI RETURNED TO CHANG AN

AS HONOURED AS I AM TO RECEIVE YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S COMPLIMENTS, I FEAR THAT MOST OF THE SHU FORCES RETREATED SAFELY TO HANZHONG AND THEREFORE STILL POSE A THREAT TO OUR PEACE.

EXCELLENT WORK IN REPELLING THE SHU INVASION, SIMA YI. YOU HAVE RESTORED PEACE AND STABILITY TO WEI.

AHH, THEN WE CAN AT LAST HAVE PEACE.

HOWEVER, IF YOU GIVE ME THE ORDER, I WILL MARCH OUR ARMIES TO SUBJUGATE THE SHU LANDS FOR GOOD AT ONCE.

CONQUERING HANZHONG IS A MAJOR UNDERTAK-ING WHICH MAY LEAVE US VULNERABLE TO A SURPRISE ATTACK FROM WU ALONG OUR SOUTHERN FRONTIER.

WHEN YOUR GREAT ANCESTOR, EMPEROR WU (CAO CAO) WRESTED HANZHONG FROM ZHANG LU, HE NOTED THAT NANZHENG WAS AS IMPENETRABLE AS A PRISON MADE BY THE HEAVENS. THE ROAD ALONG THE YE GORGE IS NOTHING BUT ROCKY PITS FOR 500 LI AND IS NO PLACE FOR AN ARMY TO TRAVEL THROUGH.

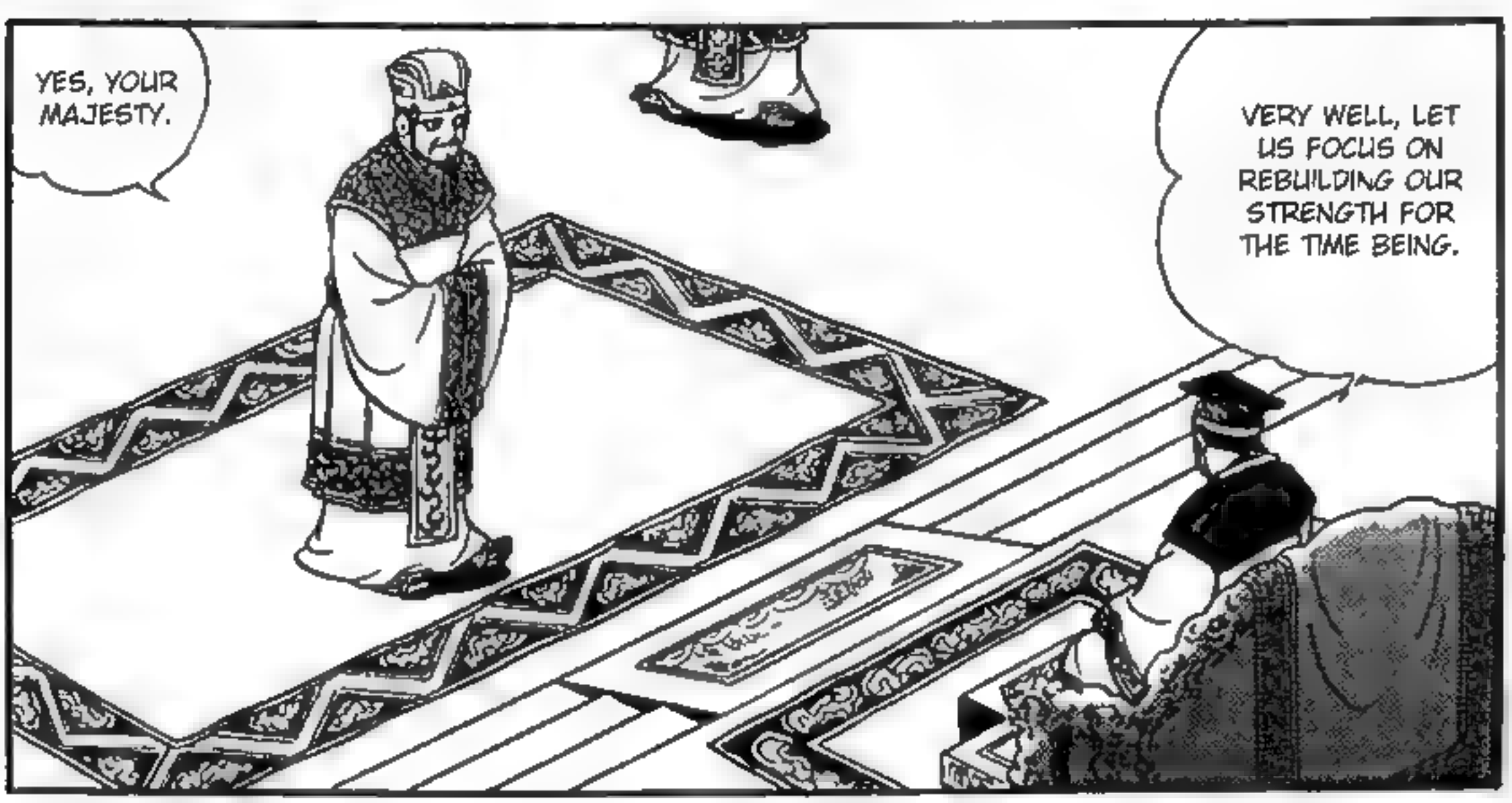
PLEASE WAIT, YOUR MAJESTY.

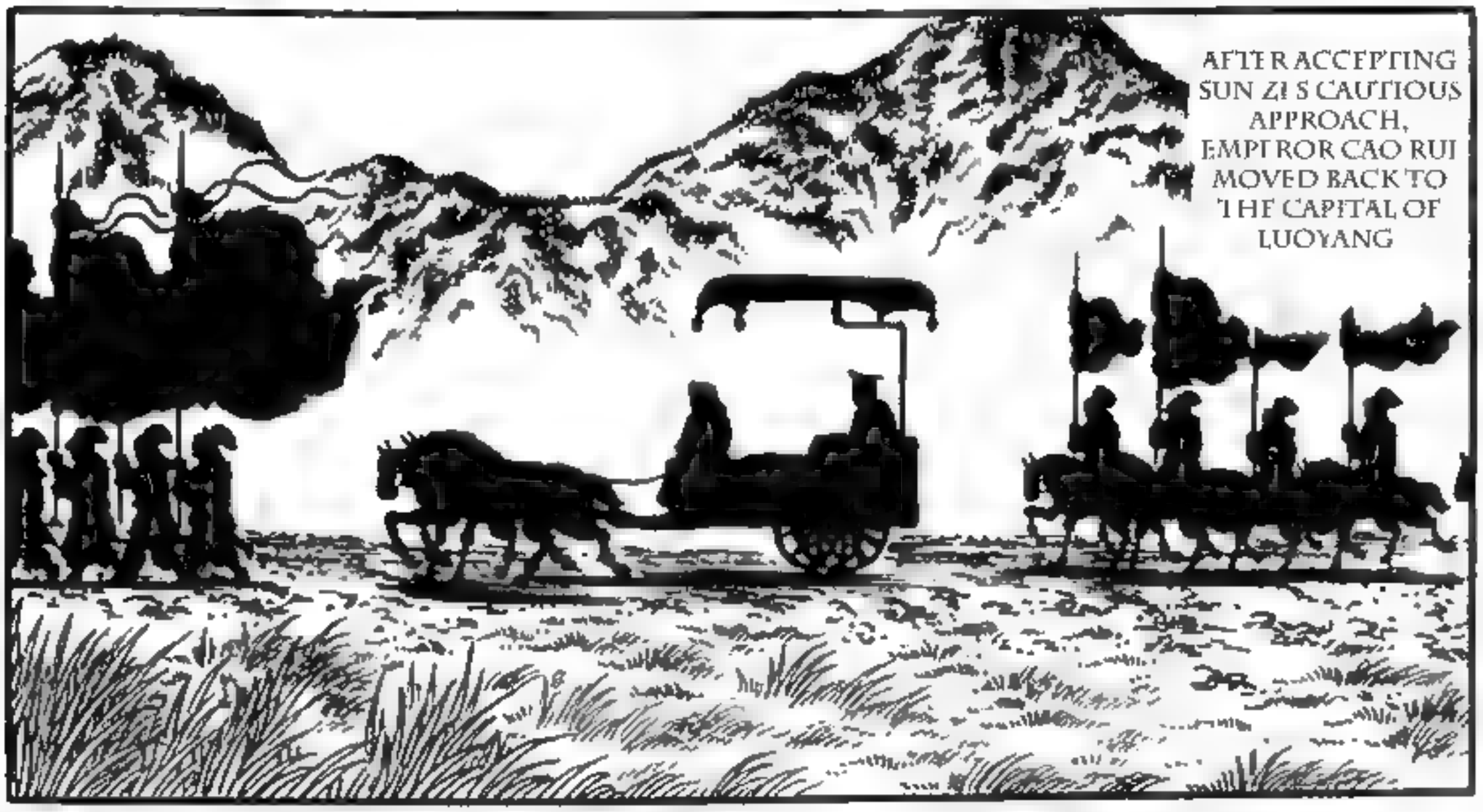
HM...

HENCE, I ADVISE WE STRENGTHEN OUR BORDERS AND ARMIES WHILE WAITING FOR SHU AND WU TO BECOME HOSTILE TO EACH OTHER ONCE AGAIN.

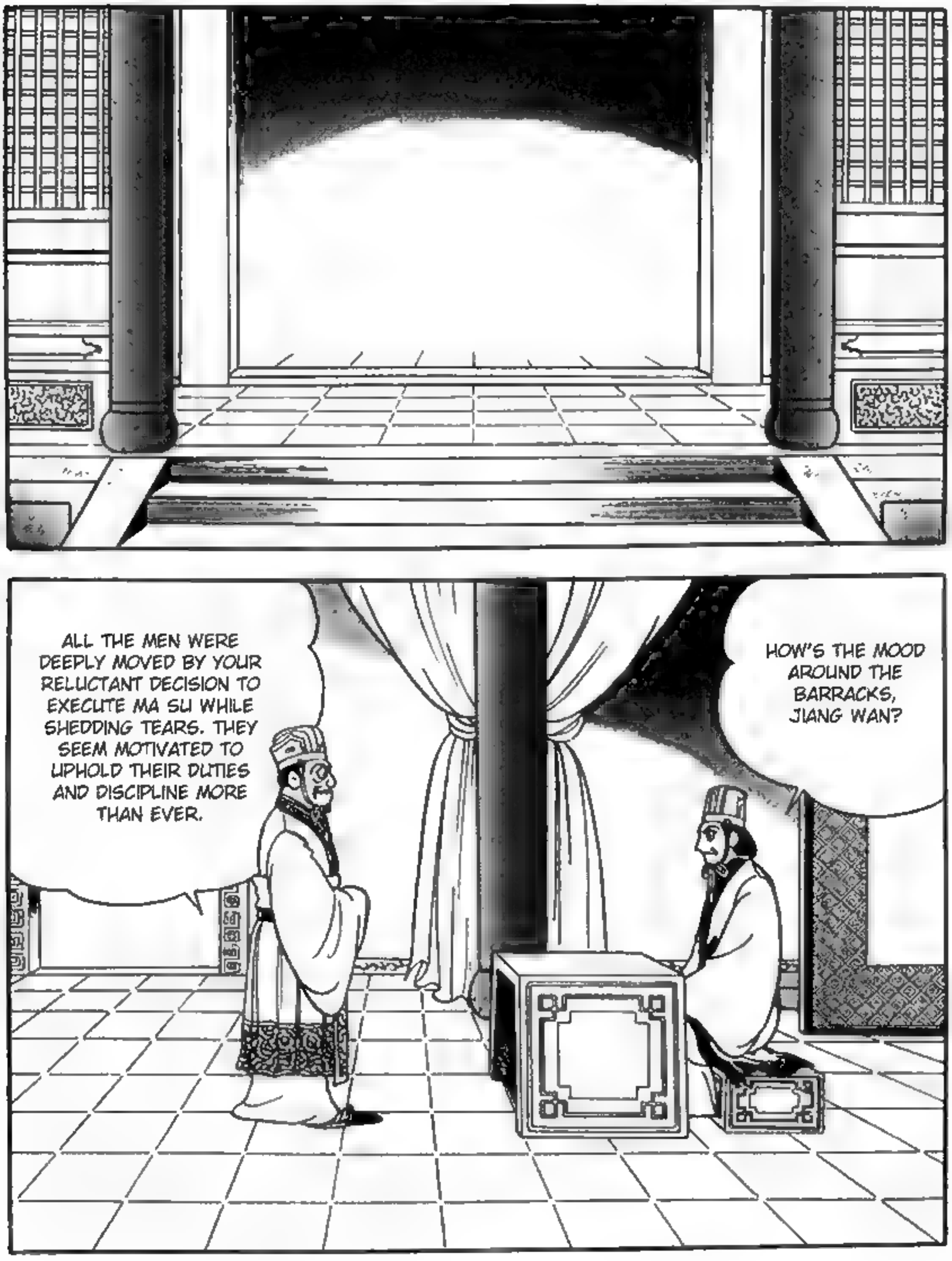
CHIEF SECRETARIAT SUN ZI BRINGS UP A GOOD POINT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS OBJECTION, SIMA YI?


YES, YOUR MAJESTY.
VERY WELL, LET US FOCUS ON REBUILDING OUR STRENGTH FOR THE TIME BEING.


AFTER ACCEPTING SUN ZI'S CAUTIOUS APPROACH, EMPEROR CAO RUI MOVED BACK TO THE CAPITAL OF LUOYANG

RELINQUISHING THE CHANCELLORSHIP


ALL THE MEN WERE DEEPLY MOVED BY YOUR RELUCTANT DECISION TO EXECUTE MA SU WHILE SHEDDING TEARS. THEY SEEM MOTIVATED TO UPHOLD THEIR DUTIES AND DISCIPLINE MORE THAN EVER.
HOW'S THE MOOD AROUND THE BARRACKS, JIANG WAN?

IT IS ONLY EXPECTED FOR MORALE AND DISCIPLINE TO FALL IN THE AFTER-MATH OF A BITTER DEFEAT. IT IS THEN A RELIEF TO HEAR OUR MEN HAVE NOT LOST THEIR SPIRITS IN SPITE OF OUR DEFEAT.

I SEE... IF THE EXECUTION NSPIRES THOSE STILL LIVING TO WORK HARDER, THAN MA SU'S DEATH WILL NOT BE IN VAIN.

YES, SIR.

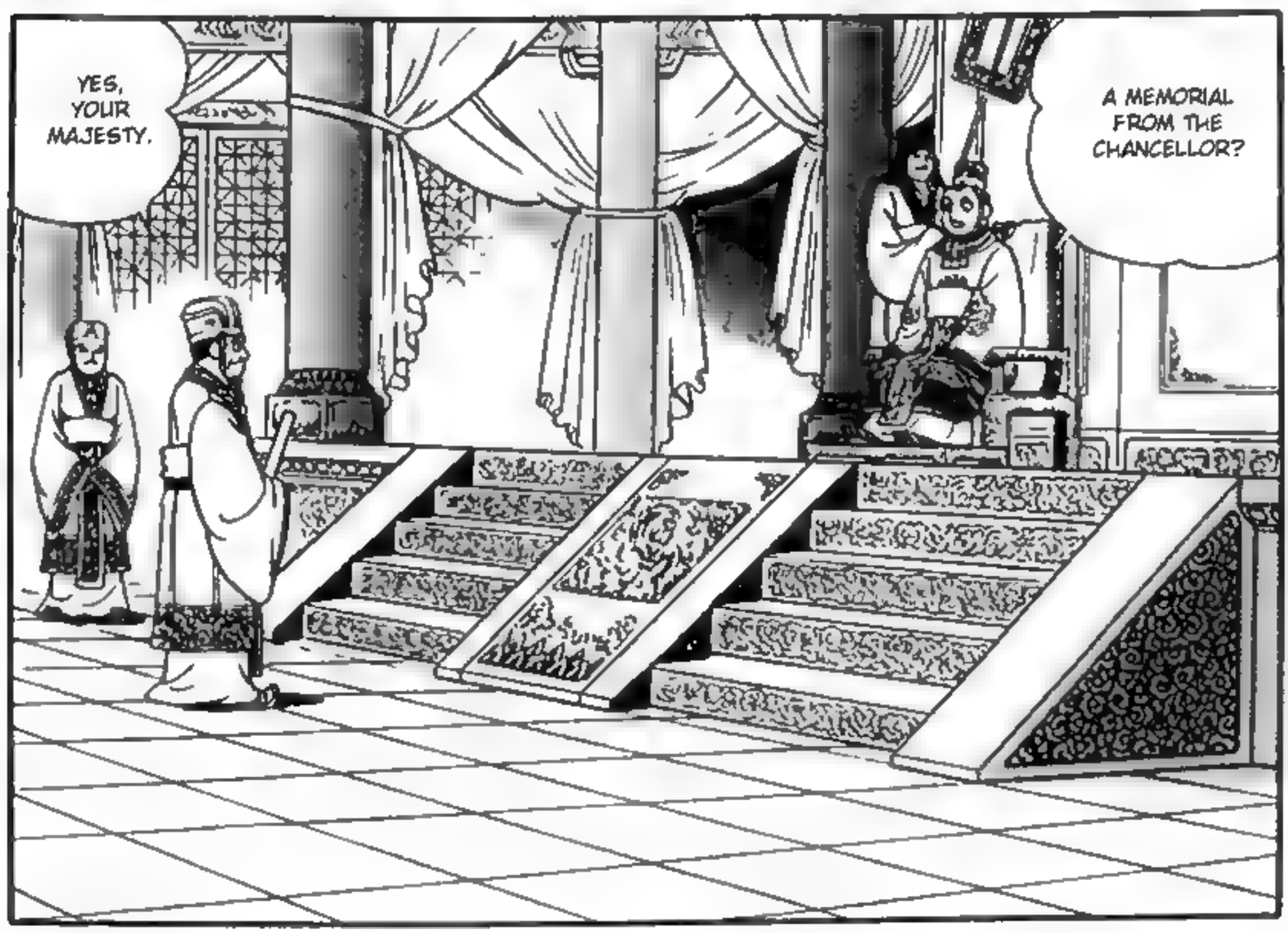
A TRUE DEFEAT COMES FROM WITHIN, WHEN THE CITIZENS CANNOT OR WILL NOT MUSTER THE STRENGTH TO SERVE THEIR STATE. IF OUR SOLDIERS STILL WISH TO FIGHT FOR US, THEN WE WILL HAVE A FUTURE.

PARDON?

NOW, IT IS TIME FOR ME TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ERRS.

PLEASE PRESENT THIS TO OUR EMPEROR.

CHENGDU


YES, YOUR MAJESTY.
A MEMORIAL FROM THE CHANCELLOR?

HOWEVER, AS THE CHANCELLOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE THREE ARMIES, NO ONE DARES TO POINT OUT MY CULPABILITY. THUS, I WILLINGLY REQUEST TO YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY THAT I BE DEMOTED THREE RANKS AND RELINQUISH THE CHANCELLORSHIP.

YOUR SERVANT LIANG, DESPITE POSSESSING MEAGRE ABILITIES, LED THREE ARMIES INTO WEI ONLY TO SUFFER A DISASTROUS DEFEAT AT JIETING AND RETREAT. THE FAILURE IS ALL DUE TO MY INADEQUACY.

READ IT THEN.

YES.

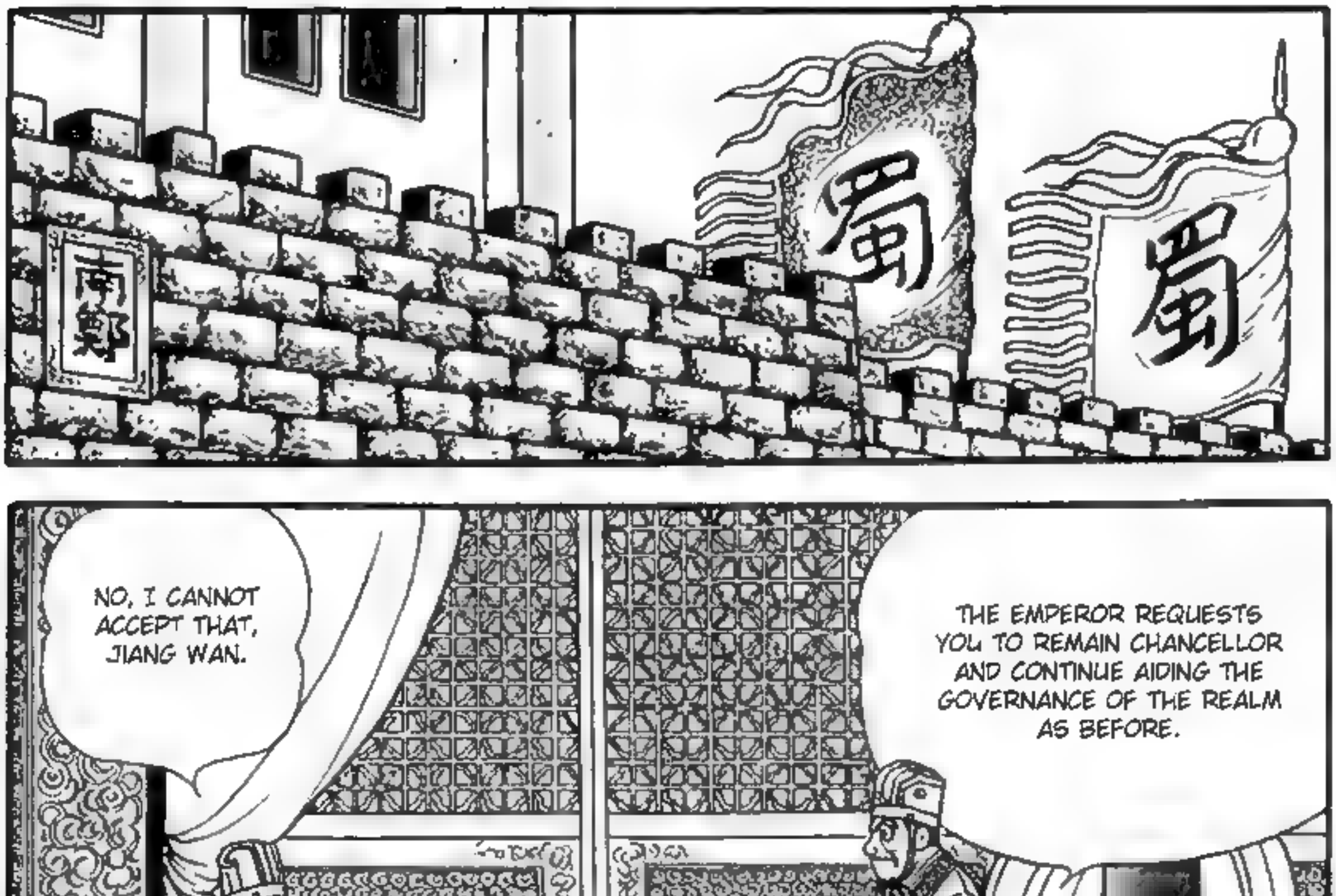
THE CHANCELLOR FEELS DEEPLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAILURE OF HIS NORTHERN CAMPAIGN...

WHAT? RELINQUISH THE CHANCELLOR-SHIP!?

YES.

PLEASE TELL HIM TO CONTINUE HIS SERVICE AS BEFORE.

NO, THAT WILL NOT DO. VICTORY AND DEFEATS ARE COMMONPLACE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. HOW CAN I DEMOTE HIM THREE RANKS JUST BECAUSE OF A SINGLE LOSS?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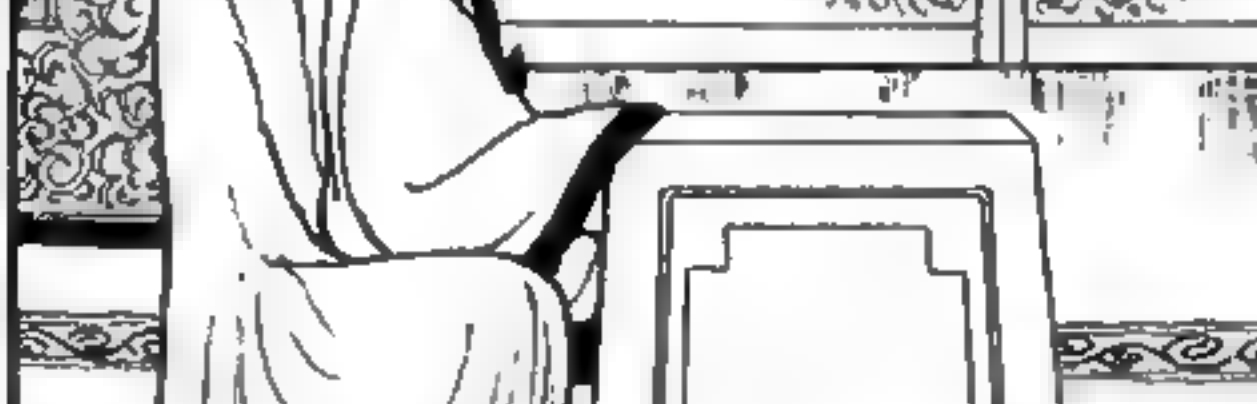
NO, I CANNOT ACCEPT THAT, JIANG WAN.
THE EMPEROR REQUESTS YOU TO REMAIN CHANCELLOR AND CONTINUE AIDING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE REALM AS BEFORE.


I HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO SHOW NO LENIENCY BY EXECUTING MA SU.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CANNOT?

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, I SHOULD COMMIT SUICIDE FOR MY FAILURE TO DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO QUALIFIED OFFICERS. THE ONLY THING STOPPING ME FROM THAT IS THE FORMER EMPEROR'S FINAL WISH ON HIS DEATHBED FOR ME TO HELP GOVERN THE EMPIRE AND AID HIS SON .

BUT IF I MAKE A LONE EXCEPTION FOR MYSELF, I WILL MAKE THE LAWS I TRIED SO HARD TO MAKE CLEAR AND APPLICABLE TO ALL AMBIGUOUS AND HOLLOW. WITHOUT LAW, THERE IS NO AUTHORITY AND ONLY CHAOS.

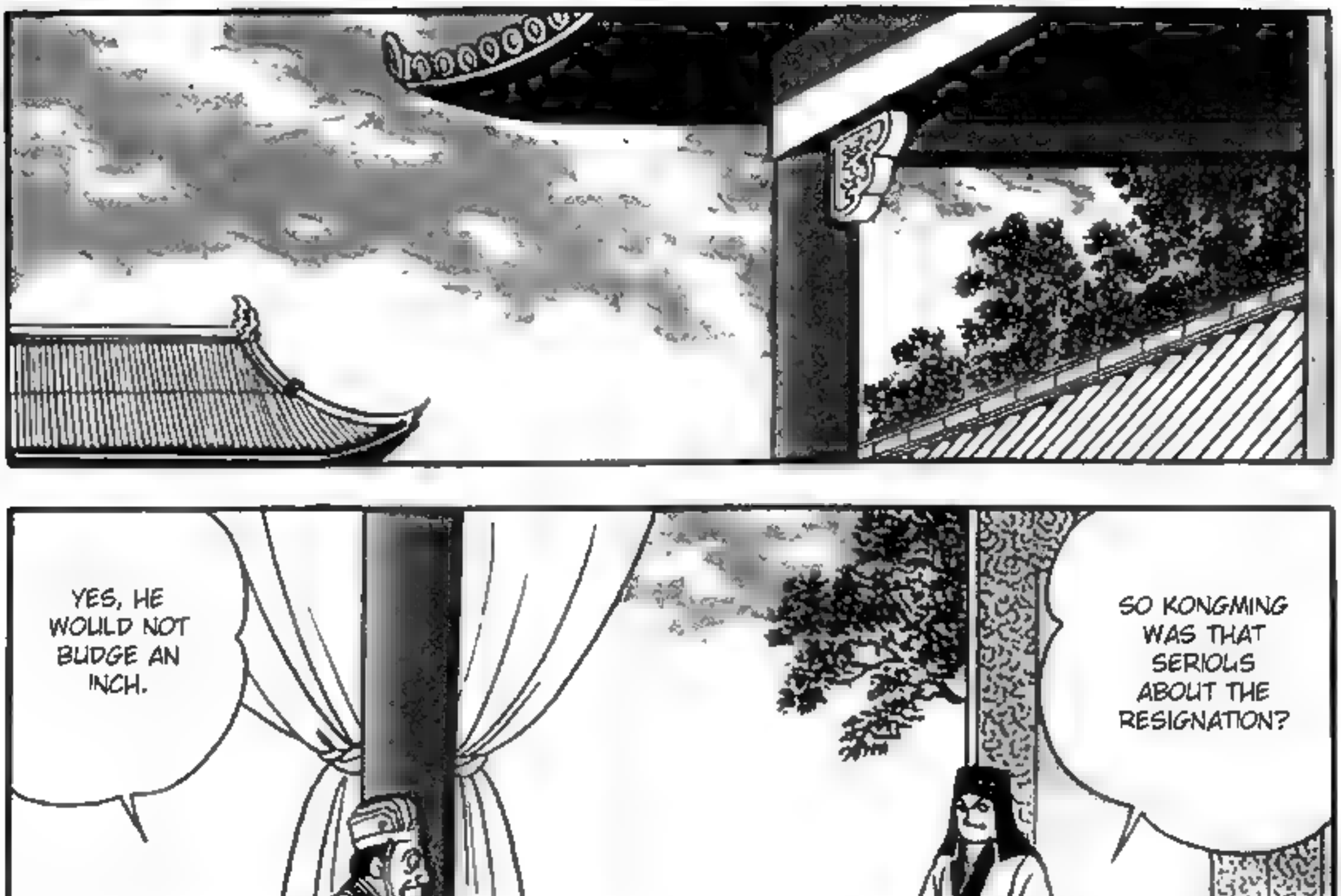
PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO DISSUADE ME ANY MORE.

VERY WELL, I WILL GO ASK ONCE MORE.

BUT WHO ELSE IS FIT TO SERVE AS CHANCELLOR IN THESE TIMES IF NOT YOU, SIR?

I APOLOGIZE FOR MAKING YOU DO THIS AGAIN, BUT PLEASE GO TO CHENGDU ONCE MORE AND ASK HIS MAJESTY TO ACCEPT MY RESIGNATION OF THE CHANCELLORSHIP.

THUS JIANG WAN RODE TO CHENGDU AGAIN


YES, HE WOULD NOT BUDGE AN INCH.
SO KONGMING WAS THAT SERIOUS ABOUT THE RESIGNATION?

HMM...

YES...
BUT WHO COULD EVER FILL HIS SHOES...? THIS IS QUITE THE PREDICAMENT.

AND KONGMING WILL NOW BE DEMOTED TO GENERAL OF THE RIGHT, STILL GIVING HIM COMMAND OF THE SHU ARMED FORCES.

I WILL TEMPORARILY RETIRE THE POST OF CHANCELLOR.

AH, I GOT IT!

YES, SINCE HE IS NOW DEMOTED AS HE REQUESTED, TELL HIM TO ACCEPT HIS NEW TITLE WITHOUT COMPLAINTS.

A MERE TITLE CHANGE OUT OF FORMALITY?

WITH THIS RESPONSE, JIANG WAN RETURNED TO HANZHONG

I ACCEPT.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING, BY THE AUTHORITY OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU ARE HEREBY DEMOTED TO THE RANK OF GENERAL OF THE RIGHT.

BY THE WAY, CHAN- EXCUSE ME. I MEAN, GENERAL OF THE RIGHT, DO YOU THINK ANOTHER CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEI IS POSSIBLE WITH THE LEGIONS OF BATTLE-HARDENED VETERANS IN HANZHONG?

YES, THANK YOU, JIANG WAN.

AND WITH THAT, THE AFFAIR IS SETTLED, YES?

WARS CANNOT BE WON WITH THE COMMANDER'S WIT ALONE. NOR CAN THEY BE WON WITH JUST NUMBERS OF TROOPS AND SUPPLIES.

THE RECENT DEFEAT TAUGHT ME A VALUABLE LESSON.

MEANING...?

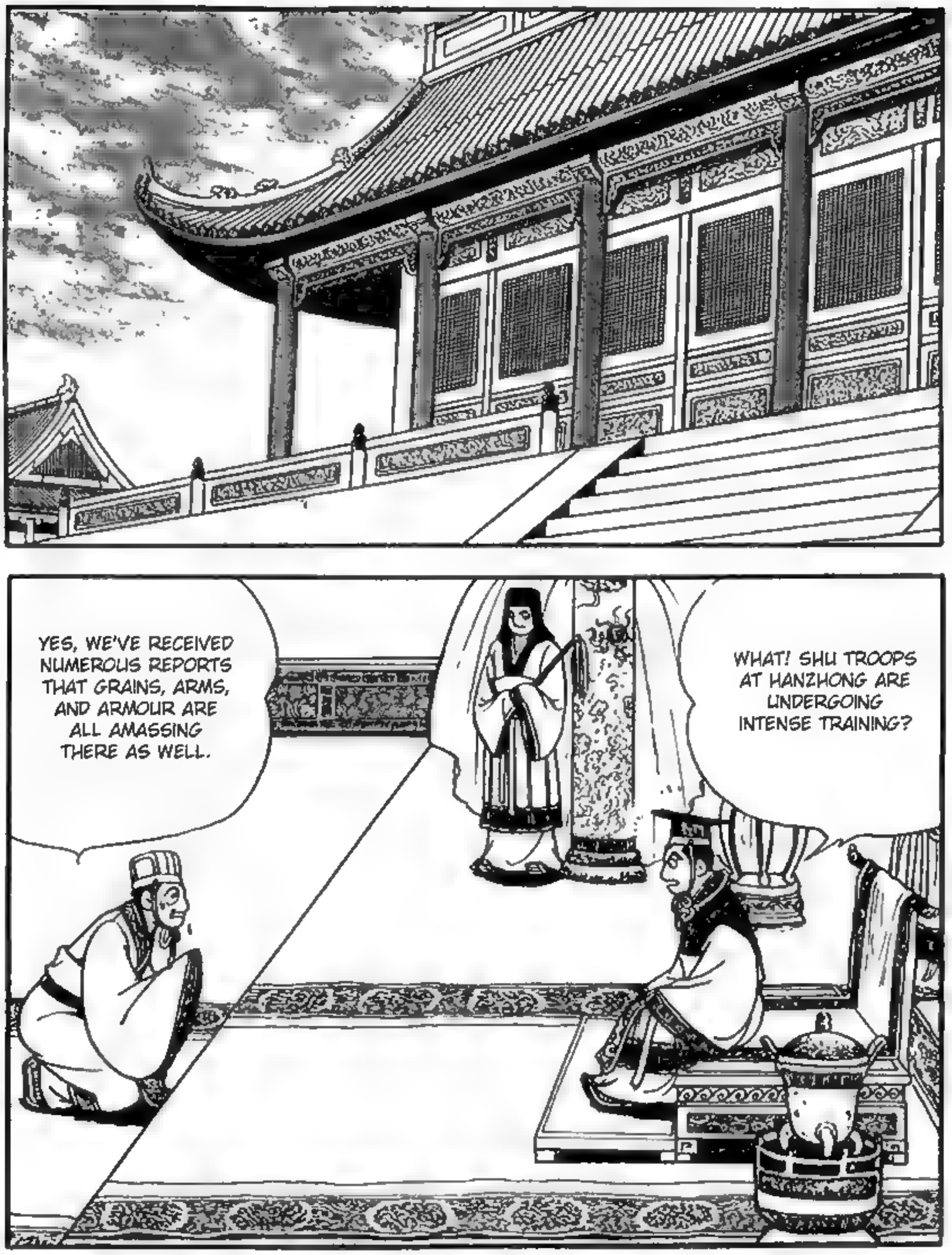
I WILL STRIKE ONCE MORE WHEN THAT'S DONE.

THE FAILURE THIS TIME GOES TO ENTIRE OFFICER CORPS FROM ME AT THE TOP, DOWN TO THE VERY BOTTOM. ALL THE NUMBERS OF FOOT SOLDIERS WE HAVE ARE USELESS, IF NOT LED BY COMPETENT OFFICERS. THIS TIME, WE WILL TRAIN A THOROUGHLY ELITE ARMY.

KONGMING THUS FOCUSED ON DAILY DRILLING OF TROOPS AT HANZHONG IN PREPARATION FOR HIS NEXT BIG PLAN

IN THE MIDST OF THIS TRAINING CAME THE NEWS THAT ZHAO ZILONG FELL ILL, PERHAPS FROM THE STRENUOUS TOLL THE CAMPAIGN TOOK ON HIS OLD BODY

BY THREE ROADS


YES, WE'VE RECEIVED NUMEROUS REPORTS THAT GRAINS, ARMS, AND ARMOUR ARE ALL AMASSING THERE AS WELL.
WHAT! SHU TROOPS AT HANZHONG ARE UNDERGOING INTENSE TRAINING?

I SAY WE STRIKE FIRST, BY INVADING INTO *THEIR* LANDS!

THEN THAT MUST MEAN THEY PLAN TO INVADE US ONCE MORE!

YES, WE MUST ATTACK NOW BEFORE THEY ARE FULLY PREPARED!

AGREED! TRUE, THEY STILL HAVE ZHUGE LIANG, BUT EVEN HE WAS HUMBLED BEFORE THE MIGHT OF OUR ARMY AT JIETING! WE OUGHT NOT TO FEAR HIM SO!

GENTLEMEN, PLEASE CALM YOURSELVES!

HOWEVER, THAT WAS NOT DUE TO ZHUGE LIANG'S NEGLIGENCE, BUT RATHER MA SU'S FOLLY. ZHUGE LIANG MUST NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED DESPITE OUR VICTORY.

TRUE, OUR ARMIES WERE ABLE TO HALT THE SHU ADVANCE BY CUTTING OFF THEIR SUPPLY ROADS AT JIETING.

HAD MA SU BLOCKED AND FORTIFIED THE NARROW HILL PATHS OF JIETING, OUR ARMIES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PASS THROUGH AND CUT OFF THEIR SUPPLY ROUTES. IF NOT FOR MA SU'S FOLLY, CHANG'AN WOULD HAVE SURELY FALLEN OR BEEN IN DANGER OF FALLING BY NOW.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT! BY THE SOUND OF THE REPORTS, THEY MIGHT ATTACK EVEN TOMORROW!

IT IS BEST TO SIMPLY FORTIFY OUR DEFENSES ALONG THE BORDER FOR NOW.

I DO NOT OBJECT TO MUSTERING MORE TROOPS AND STRENGTHNING OUR DEFENSES, BUT WILL THAT REALLY BE ENOUGH?

NO, I HIGHLY DOUBT THEY WOULD ATTACK NOW DURING THE HOT SUMMER HEAT. CONVERSELY, THE ENEMY POSITIONS AT HANZHONG ARE TOO WELL GUARDED FOR US TO CAPTURE THEM RIGHT NOW.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ADDITIONAL FORT AT CHENCANG WILL BE QUITE BENEFICIAL, YOUR MAJESTY.

ZHUGE LIANG WILL NOT REPEAT THE SAME STRATEGY THE NEXT TIME HE TRIES TO CAPTURE CHANG'AN.

AT CHENCANG?

*GALLERY ROADS: A ROAD OF WOODEN PLANKS WEDGED INTO THE SIDE OF CLIFFS
* THREE QINS: THREE KINGDOMS IN THE GUANZHONG REGION WHICH BRIEFLY EXISTED AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE QIN DYNASTY

HOWEVER, THIS WAS A FEINT AS THE CRAFTY HAN XIN HAD ALREADY FOUND A NEW PATH TO GUANZHONG VIA CHENCANG. THUS, THE THREE QINS WERE SURPRISED AND HAN XIN SUCCESSFULLY CAPTURED CHANG'AN.
RECALL THE FOUNDER OF THE HAN DYNASTY'S STRUGGLE FOR THE CONTROL OF THE REALM. LIU BANG BURNED THE GALLERY ROADS CONNECTING HANZHONG AND GUANZHONG TO PREVENT ENEMY ATTACKS. WHEN AT LAST, HE CALLED FOR THE INVASION OF GUANZHONG, HIS FAMOUS GENERAL HAN XIN ORDERED THESE ROADS TO BE BUILT AGAIN.
SINCE ZHUGE LIANG WILL NOT REPEAT HIMSELF, HE WILL ACT AS HAN XIN DID, MEANING THE DEFENSE OF CHENCANG IS CRUCIAL FOR US.
AH YES, I'VE CERTAINLY HEARD OF HAN XIN'S EXPLOITS.
GENERAL HAO ZHAO IS A STRONG AND LOYAL MAN WHO HAS GOVERNED HEXI EXTREMELY WELL FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS. LOVED BY THE CITIZENS AND FEARED BY HIS ENEMIES, HE IS THE PERFECT CANDIDATE FOR THE DEFENSE OF CHENCANG.
A VERY KEEN OBSERVATION, BUT WHO SHOULD I SEND TO DEFEND CHENCANG?

A WISE DECISION.
THEN I HEREBY APPOINT HAO ZHAO TO GENERAL WHO GUARDS THE WEST. HE IS TO OVERSEE THE CHENCANG'S DEFENSE.

THUS, WEI CONSTRUCTED A NEW FORT AT CHENCANG TO PREPARE FOR A FUTURE SHU INVASION

SHORTLY AFTER THIS NEW APPOINTMENT AN URGENT MESSAGE WAS SENT TO LUOYANG FROM YANGZHOU'S COMMANDER CAO XIU

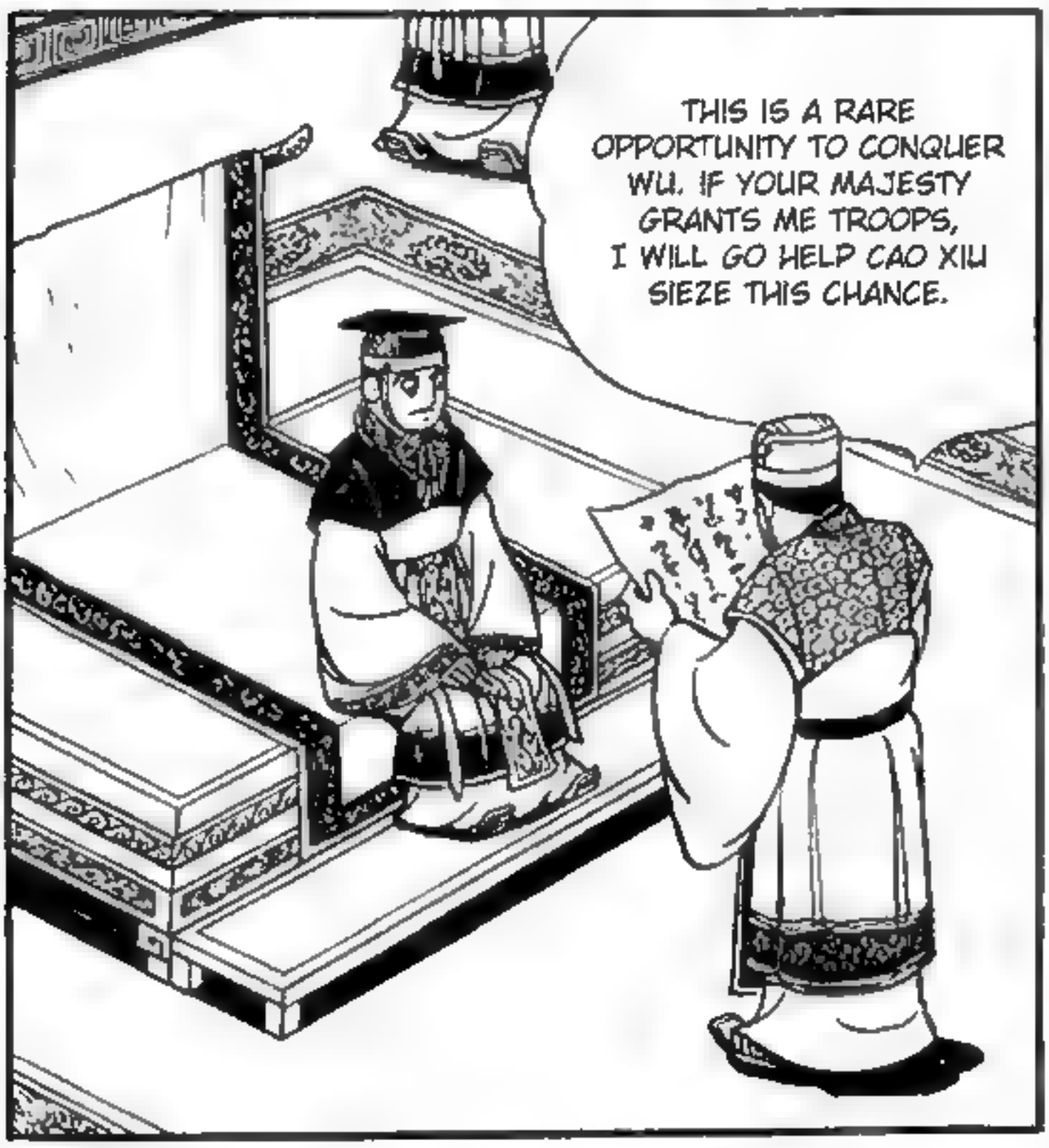
YES, AND IF WEI SENDS TROOPS, HE VOLUNTEERS TO GUIDE THE WEI INVASION OF WU.

ZHOU FANG, THE WU GOVERNOR OF POYANG, WISHES TO TRANSFER ALLEGIANCE TO WEI!?

THIS IS HIS SECRET LETTER, OUTLINING THE SEVEN CONDITIONS TO OVERCOME WU.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, SIMA YI?

HMM...


THIS IS A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO CONQUER WU. IF YOUR MAJESTY GRANTS ME TROOPS, I WILL GO HELP CAO XIU SIEZE THIS CHANCE.

YES... IT SEEMS QUITE SOUND.

YES, JIA KUI? DO YOU HAVE AN OPINION TO SHARE?

PLEASE WAIT, YOUR MAJESTY.

OH?

ZHOU FANG'S WORDS MUST NOT BE EASILY TRUSTED.

ZHOU FANG HAS A REPUTATION FOR HIS CUNNING IN WU. I CANNOT IMAGINE HE WOULD WILLINGLY DEFECT. THIS MUST BE A RUSE TO BAIT OUR ARMY INTO A COSTLY ATTACK.

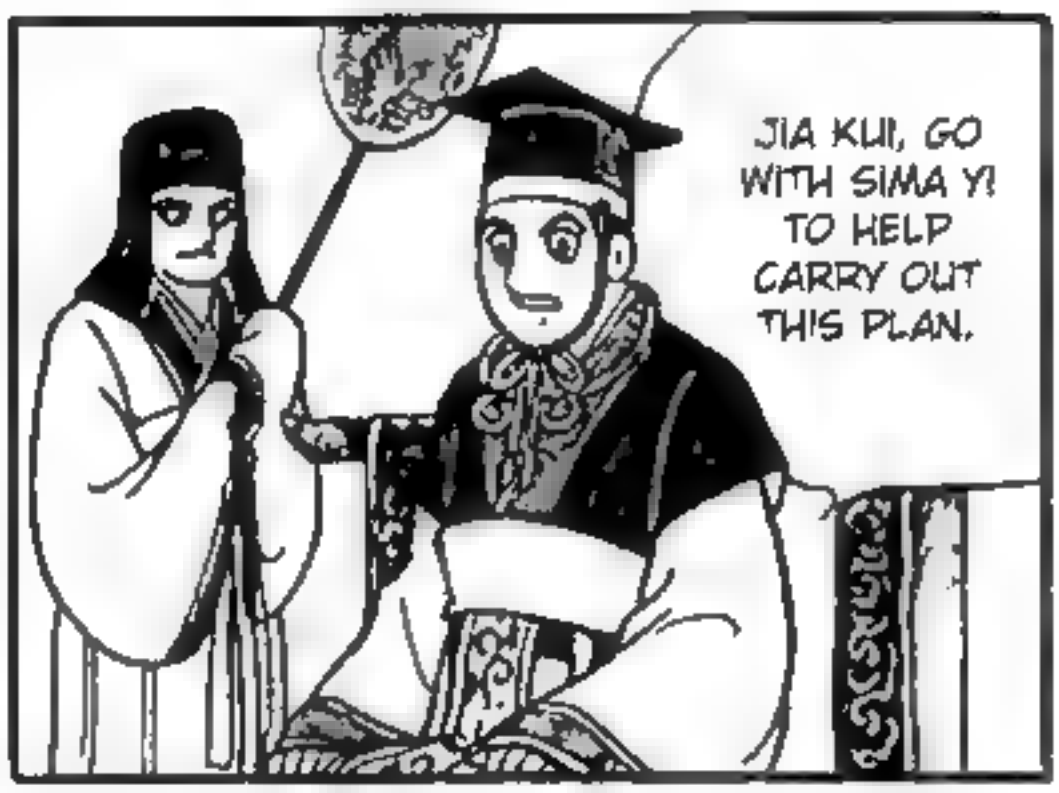
YES...

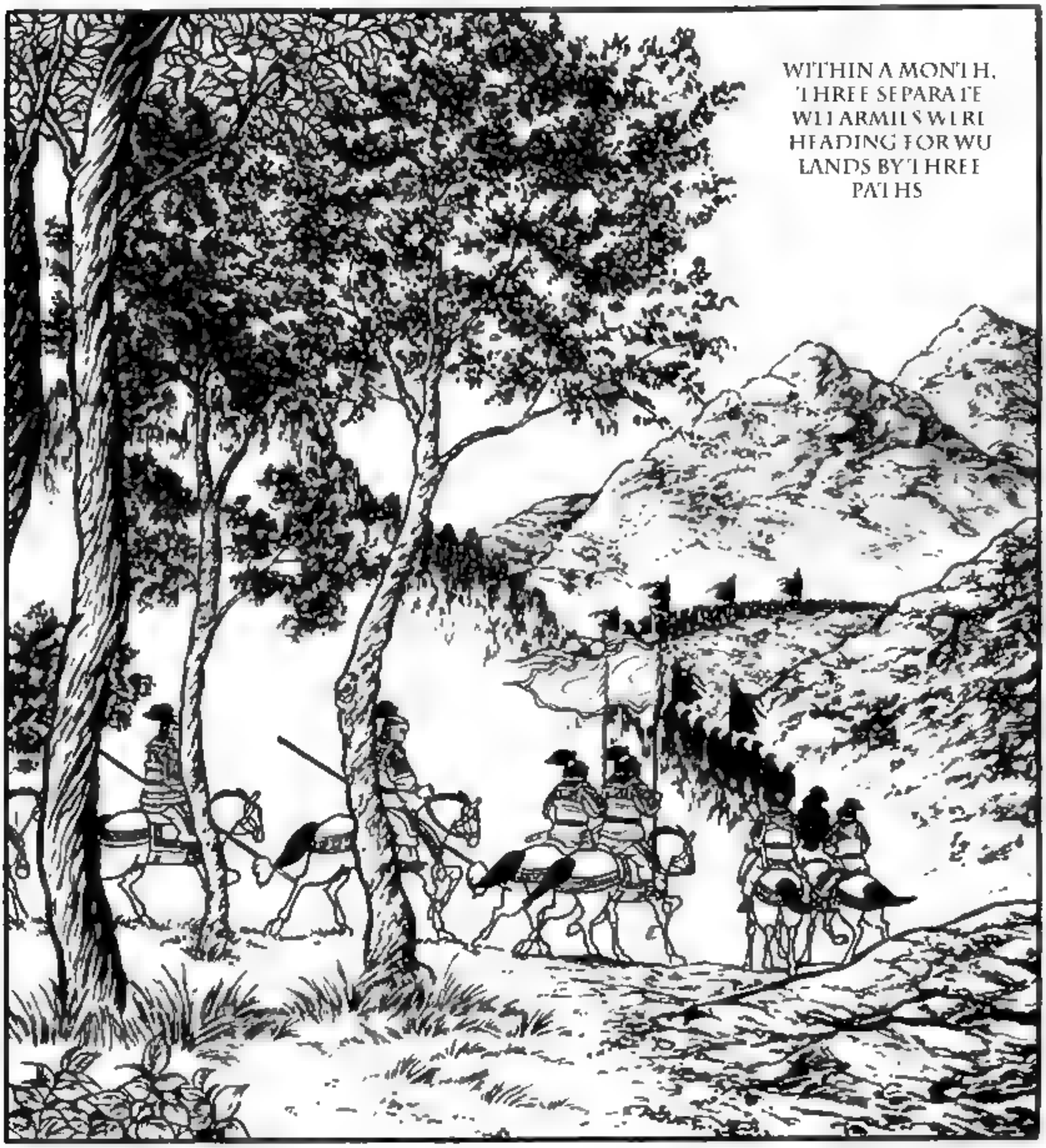
EVEN IF HIS WORDS ARE 90% LIKELY TO BE LIES, THE OFFER IS TOO ENTICING TO IGNORE COMPLETELY.

THAT SOUNDS GOOD.

I PROPOSE WE SEND OUR ARMIES TO WU BY THREE PATHS. ONE, TO HUANCHENG, TWO, TO EAST PASS, AND THREE, TO JIANGLING. THIS WAY, EVEN IF ZHOU FANG IS LYING, THE ENEMIES WILL NOT EASILY BE ABLE TO DEFEAT OUR ADVANCE.

YES YOUR MAJESTY.


JIA KUI, GO WITH SIMA YI TO HELP CARRY OUT THIS PLAN.


WITHIN A MONTH, THREE SEPARATE WEI ARMIES WERE HEADING FOR WU LANDS BY THREE PATHS

WU

YES, THEY ARE HEADING SEPARATELY TO HUANCHENG, EAST PASS, AND JIANGLING.

SO THE WEI ARMIES ARE HEADED OUR WAY, ARE THEY?

YES, ZHOU FANG HAS PROMISED TO LEAD HIM THERE.

THEN CAO XIU'S FORCE SHOULD EVENTUALLY NEAR THE EAST PASS.

GOOD. ZHOU FANG MUST HAVE SECURED CAO XIU'S TRUST AT LAST.

LU XUN, YOU WILL TAKE COMMAND OF THIS WAR.

GENTLEMEN, IF WEI ATTACKS US, THEN SHU CAN ATTACK ITS REAR. AND IF WEI ATTACKS SHU, WE CAN ATTACK WEI'S REAR. THESE ARE THE CONDITIONS OF THE SHU-WU ALLIANCE THAT WE HAVE AGREED TO, AND IS WHY WE WILL NOW RENEW OUR WAR WITH WEI.

AS YOU WISH.

A TOTAL FORCE OF 700,000 WU TROOPS NOW ALSO SPLIT INTO THREE ROADS TO MEET THE WEI ARMIES.

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LU XUN LED THE CENTRAL ARMY TO EAST PASS, WHERE ZHOU FANG PREVIOUSLY PROMISED TO LEAD THE WEI ARMY TO

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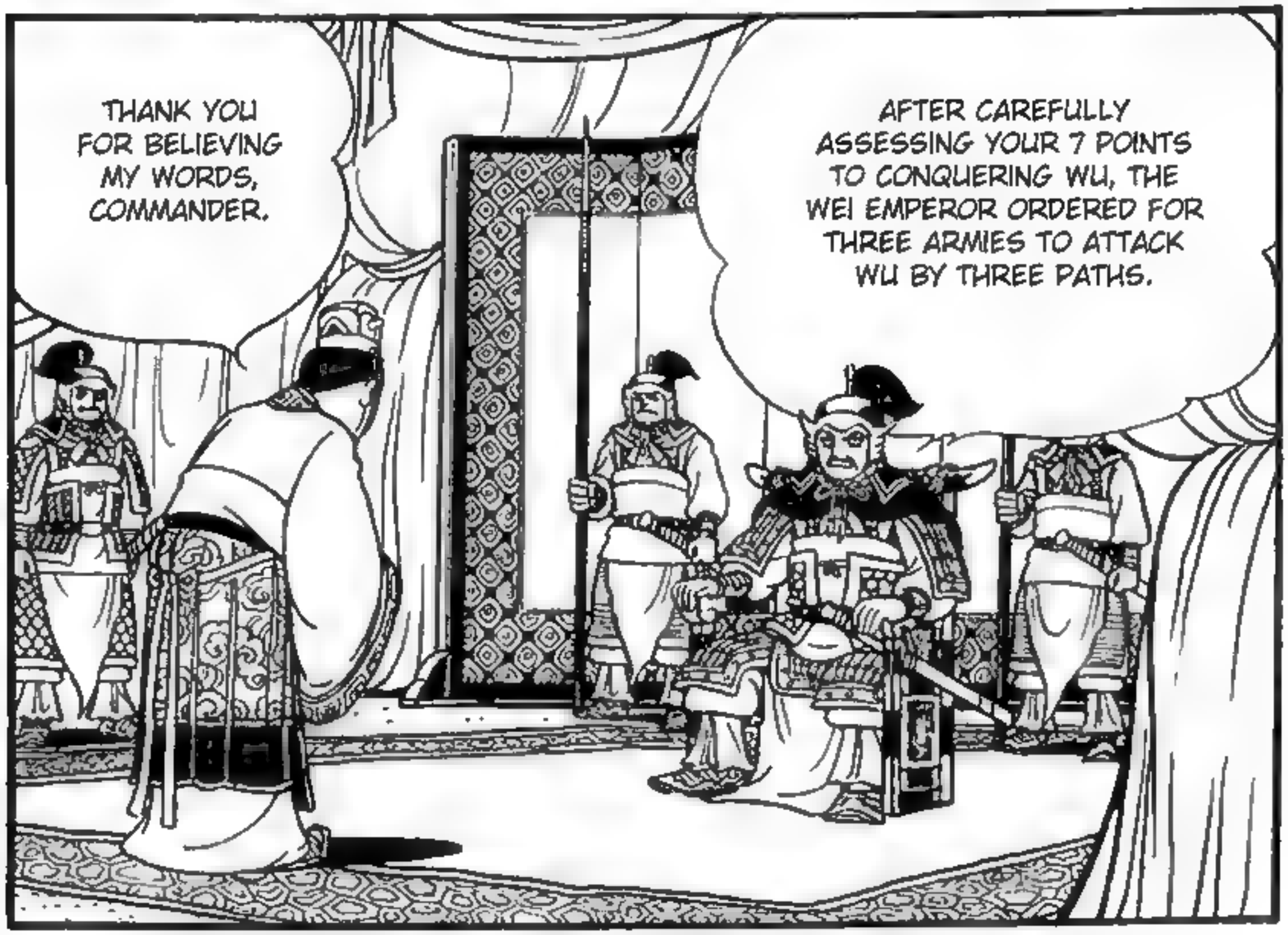
MEANWHILE, CAO XIU WAS MEETING WITH ZHOU FANG AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF HUANCHENG


THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING MY WORDS, COMMANDER.
AFTER CAREFULLY ASSESSING YOUR 7 POINTS TO CONQUERING WU, THE WEI EMPEROR ORDERED FOR THREE ARMIES TO ATTACK WU BY THREE PATHS.

THERE ARE STILL SOME IN OUR CAMP WHO DOUBT YOUR ALLEGIANCE.

NOT QUITE.

PARDON?

WELL, I'M WILLING TO GIVE YOU THE BENEFIT OF MY DOUBT, BUT SOME OF MY AIDES ARE NOT...

SO MY ACTIONS ARE ALL AN ELABORATE RUSE OF SOME SORT...?

WHAT'RE YOU DOING!? STOP HIM!

THE ONLY OPTION LEFT TO ME NOW IS TO COMMIT SUICIDE SO I WILL NOT DISGRACE MYSELF ANYMORE!

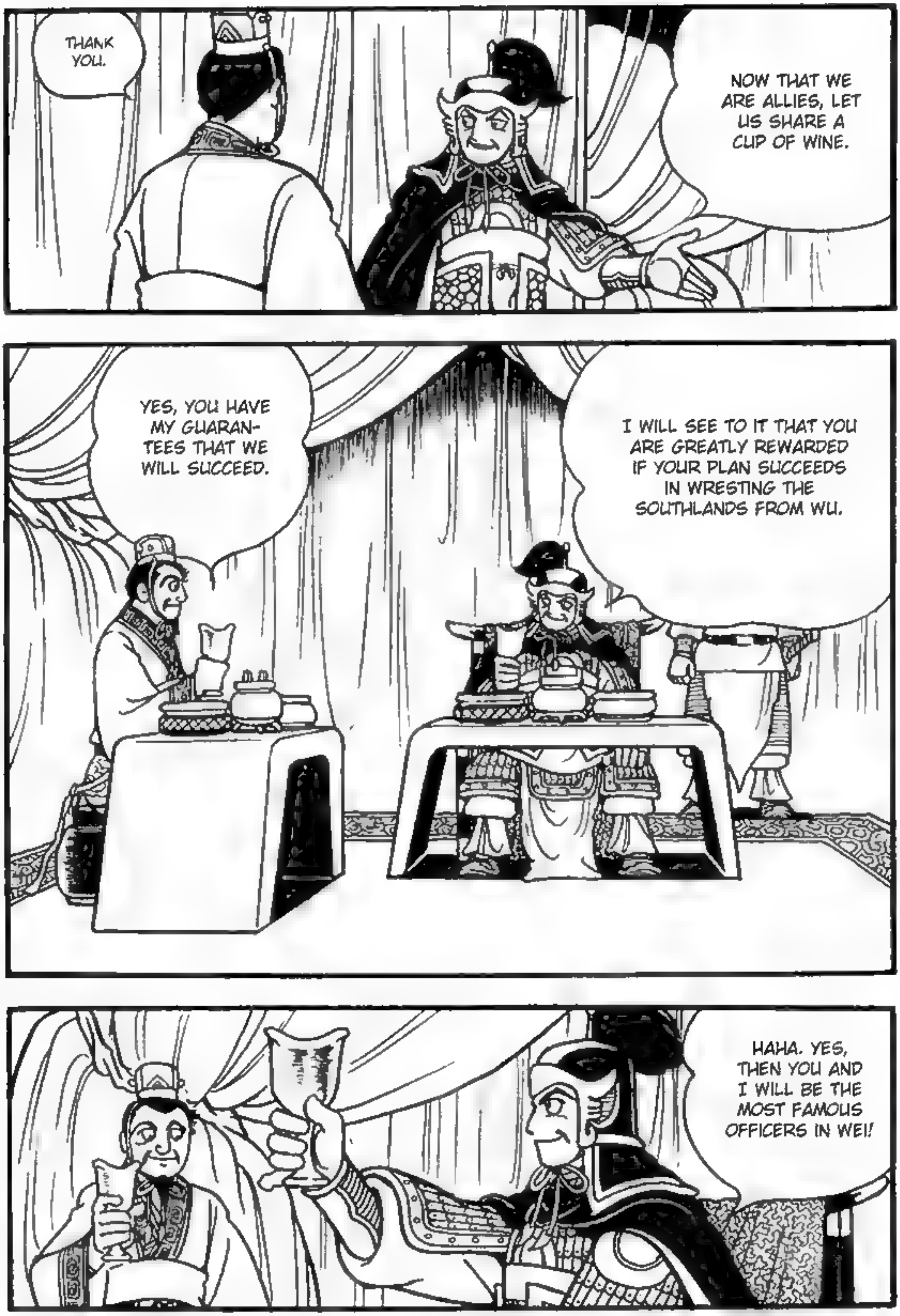
LET GO OF ME! I'VE ALREADY BURNED MY BRIDGES TO WU, BUT IF WEI WON'T ACCEPT ME EITHER, THEN I HAVE NO PLACE TO BE ANYMORE!

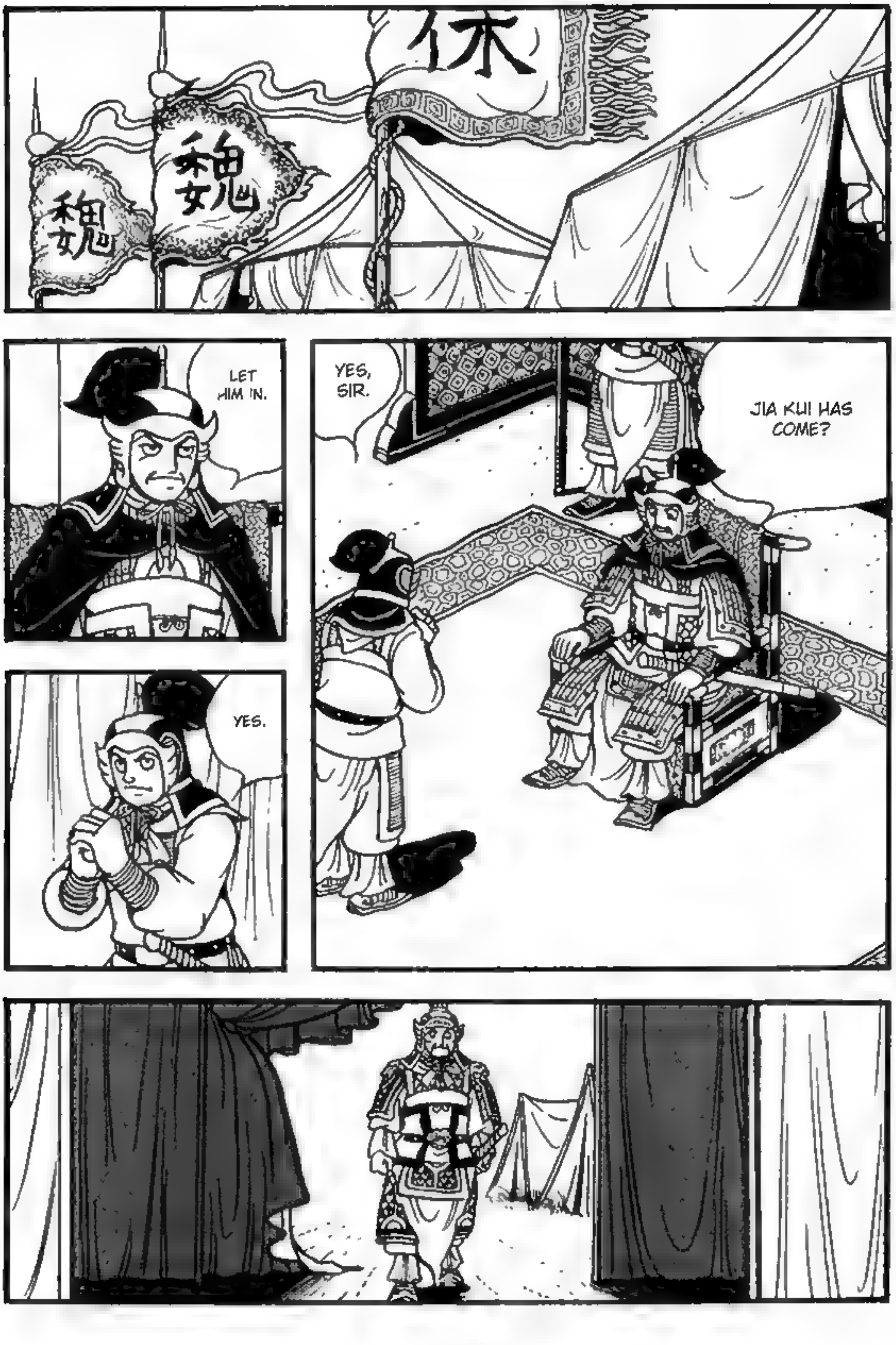
PLEASE STOP, SIR!

CALM DOWN, ZHOU FANG. I ONLY SAID THERE ARE *SOME* WHO DOUBT YOUR LOYALTIES, NOT EVERYONE. WE HAVE COME DOWN HERE WITH AN ARMY AS YOU REQUESTED, HAVE WE NOT?

*CONSIDERED SELF-MUTILIATION AND UNFILIAL TO CONFUCIAN ETHICS

VERY WELL...
LET THIS BE A SIGN OF MY SINCERITY AND WILLINGNESS TO RISK MY LIFE ON THIS ENDEAVOUR.
THERE, I HAVE CUT THE VERY HAIR THAT MY PARENTS GAVE ME!*
YES, YES. AS I SAID AT THE START, I'M PERSONALLY WILLING TO GIVE YOU THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.
SO I BEG YOU WILL ACCEPT MY HEARTFELT FEELINGS.


THANK YOU.
NOW THAT WE ARE ALLIES, LET US SHARE A CUP OF WINE.
YES, YOU HAVE MY GUARAN-TEES THAT WE WILL SUCCEED.
I WILL SEE TO IT THAT YOU ARE GREATLY REWARDED IF YOUR PLAN SUCCEEDS IN WRESTING THE SOUTHLANDS FROM WU.
HAHA. YES, THEN YOU AND I WILL BE THE MOST FAMOUS OFFICERS IN WEI!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LET HIM IN.
YES, SIR.
JIA KUI HAS COME?
YES.

WHAT?

I HAVE COME TO ADVISE YOU TO SLOW YOUR ADVANCE AND OBSERVE THE SITUATION BEFORE MOVING IN DEEPER.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, JIA KUI?

AND WHY IS THAT?

SO YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE WHO DOUBT ZHOU FANG?

IF ZHOU FANG IS LYING, THEN THERE IS LIKELY TO BE A MAJOR WU FORCE AMASSED AT HUANCHENG.

SILENCE!

ZHOU FANG IS A CUNNING OFFICER! HE CANNOT BE SO EASILY TRUSTED.

MY DECISION TO BELIEVE ZHOU FANG WAS NO SNAP DECISION! I'VE BEEN IN SECRET COMMUNICATIONS WITH HIM FOR YEARS BEFORE I FINALLY DECIDED TO GIVE HIM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT!

HMPH, I DO NOT BUY IT! CUTTING ONE'S HAIR IS MERE CHILD'S PLAY CONSIDERING WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE!

WHY, JUST YESTERDAY ZHOU FANG HAD TO BE STOPPED FROM COMMIT-TING SUICIDE WHEN I TOLD HIM HIS LOYALTIES WERE STILL IN QUESTION! AND THEN HE EVEN CUT HIS OWN HAIR AS A TOKEN OF HIS SINCERITY!

ALL I AM SUGGESTING IS FOR YOU TO SIMPLY WAIT HERE WHILE MY ARMY GETS IN BETTER POSITION FOR A FLANKING MANEUVER.

SUPICIOUS HEARTS PERCEIVE ALL ACTIONS AS SUPICIOUS.

I SEE YOUR INTENTIONS NOW! YOU WISH TO MAKE ME WAIT LIKE A TIMID FOOL WHILE YOU FIRST ATTACK THE ENEMIES AND SNATCH THE CREDIT FOR THIS CAMPAIGN!

YOU WILL NOT ORDER ME AROUND!

YOUR INCESSANT WARNINGS OF A TRAP IS ONLY DEMORALIZING MY MEN! GUARDS, EXECUTE HIM!

MNN...

EXECUTING A GENERAL BEFORE THE FIGHTING EVEN STARTS WILL ONLY SERVE TO DEMORALIZE OUR TROOPS EVEN MORE, SIR.

PLEASE CALM DOWN, COMMANDER CAO XIU.

VERY WELL, I WILL LET YOUR INSOLENCE PASS THIS TIME. YOUR ARMY IS TO STAY HERE ON STANDBY WHILE I FIRST GO AHEAD TO THE EAST PASS.

THUS, CAO XIU'S ARMY HEADED TO THE EAST PASS ALONE
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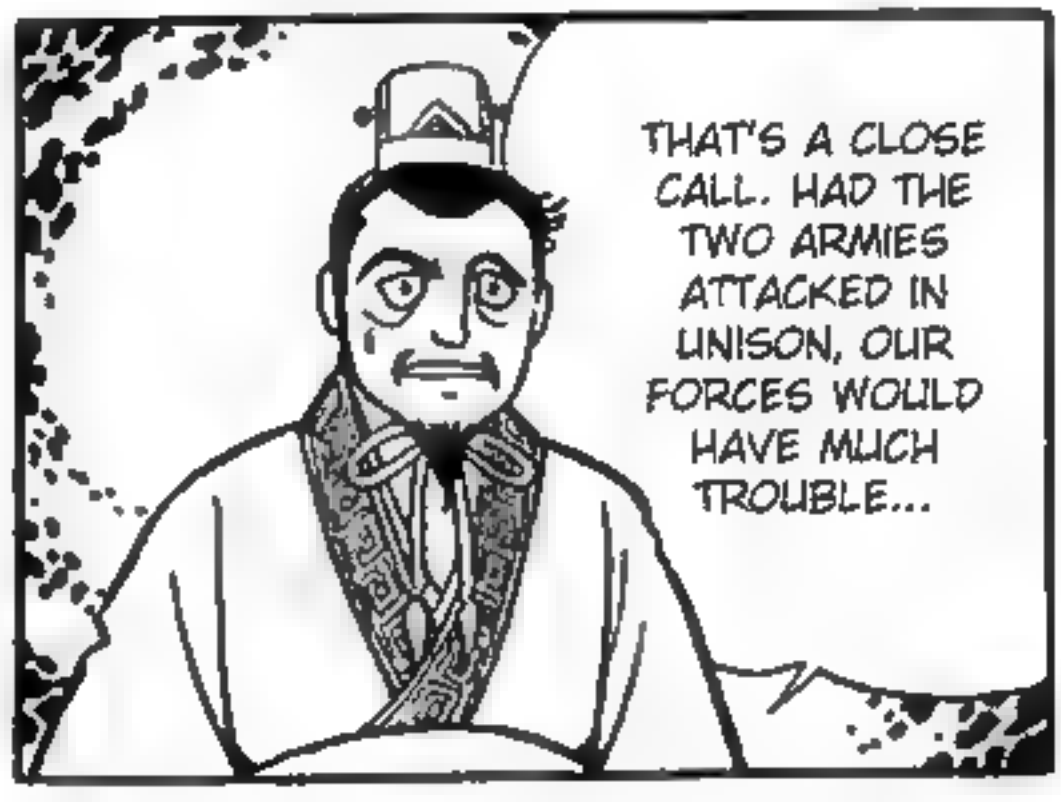
YES, JIA KUI ADVISED THEY WORK TOGETHER TO FLANK THE WU FORCES, BUT CAO XIU FOOLISHLY THOUGHT JIA KUI WAS TRYING TO STEAL CREDIT IN CASE OF VICTORY.
JIA KUI'S ARMY WAS ORDERED TO STAY BEHIND!?

I MUST INFORM LU XUN RIGHT AWAY.


THAT'S A CLOSE CALL. HAD THE TWO ARMIES ATTACKED IN UNISON, OUR FORCES WOULD HAVE MUCH TROUBLE...

YES, SIR.

TAKE THIS TO COMMANDER LU XUN AT ONCE.

ALL I HAVE TO DO NOW IS LEAD HIM TO SHIDING.

HAHAHA, CAO XIU HAS FINALLY GIVEN HIS FULL TRUST TO ME.

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YES, ZHOU FANG IS LEADING HIM TO SHIDING AS WE SPEAK, SIR.

SO CAO XIU HAS COMPLETELY FALLEN FOR OUR TRAP, HAS HE?

YES?

XU SHENG.

YES, SIR.

THE HILLS AT SHIDING ARE IDEAL FOR AMBUSHES. YOU ARE TO LEAD THE VANGUARD AND WAIT FOR THE WEI ARMY TO ARRIVE THERE.

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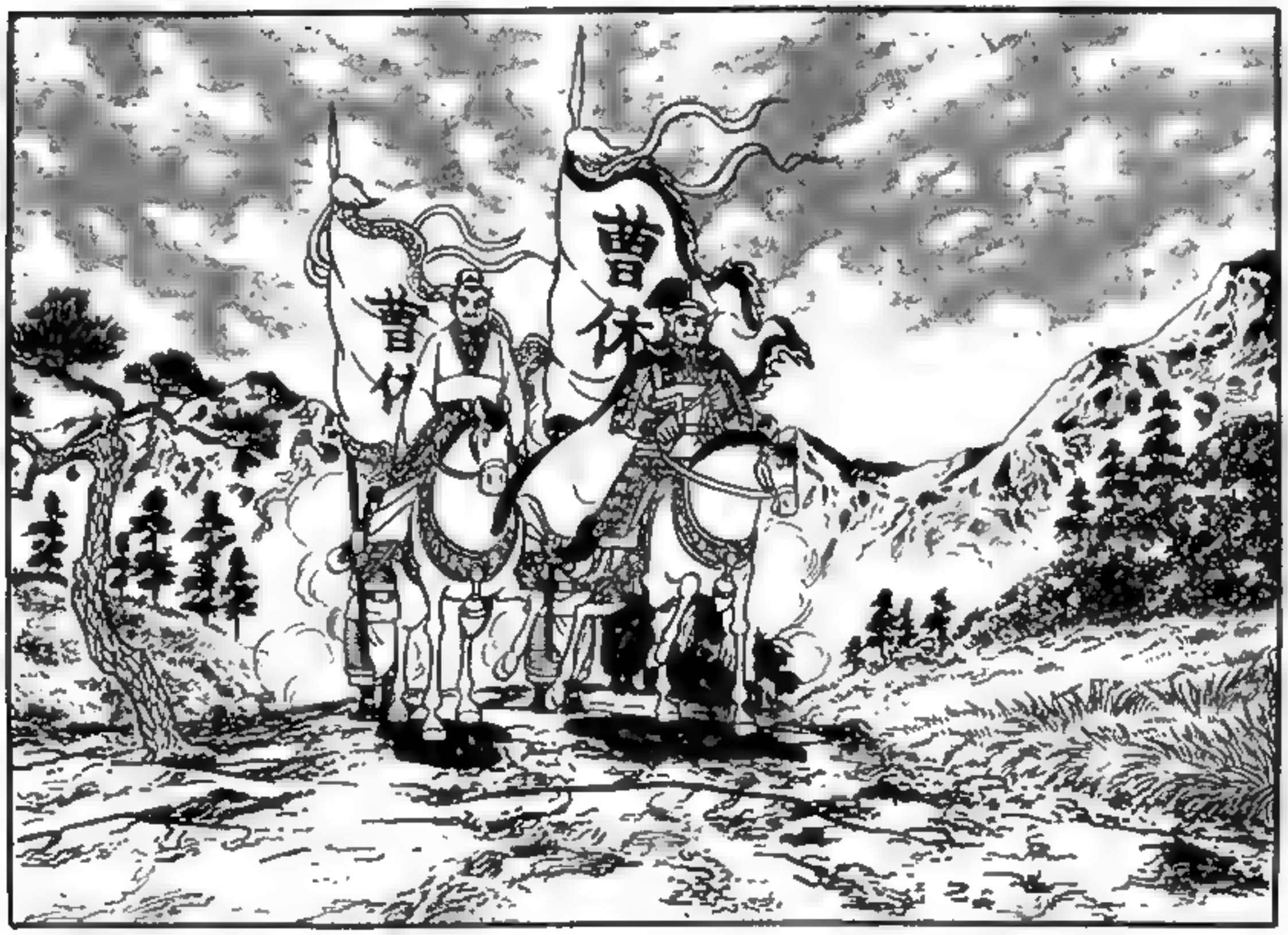
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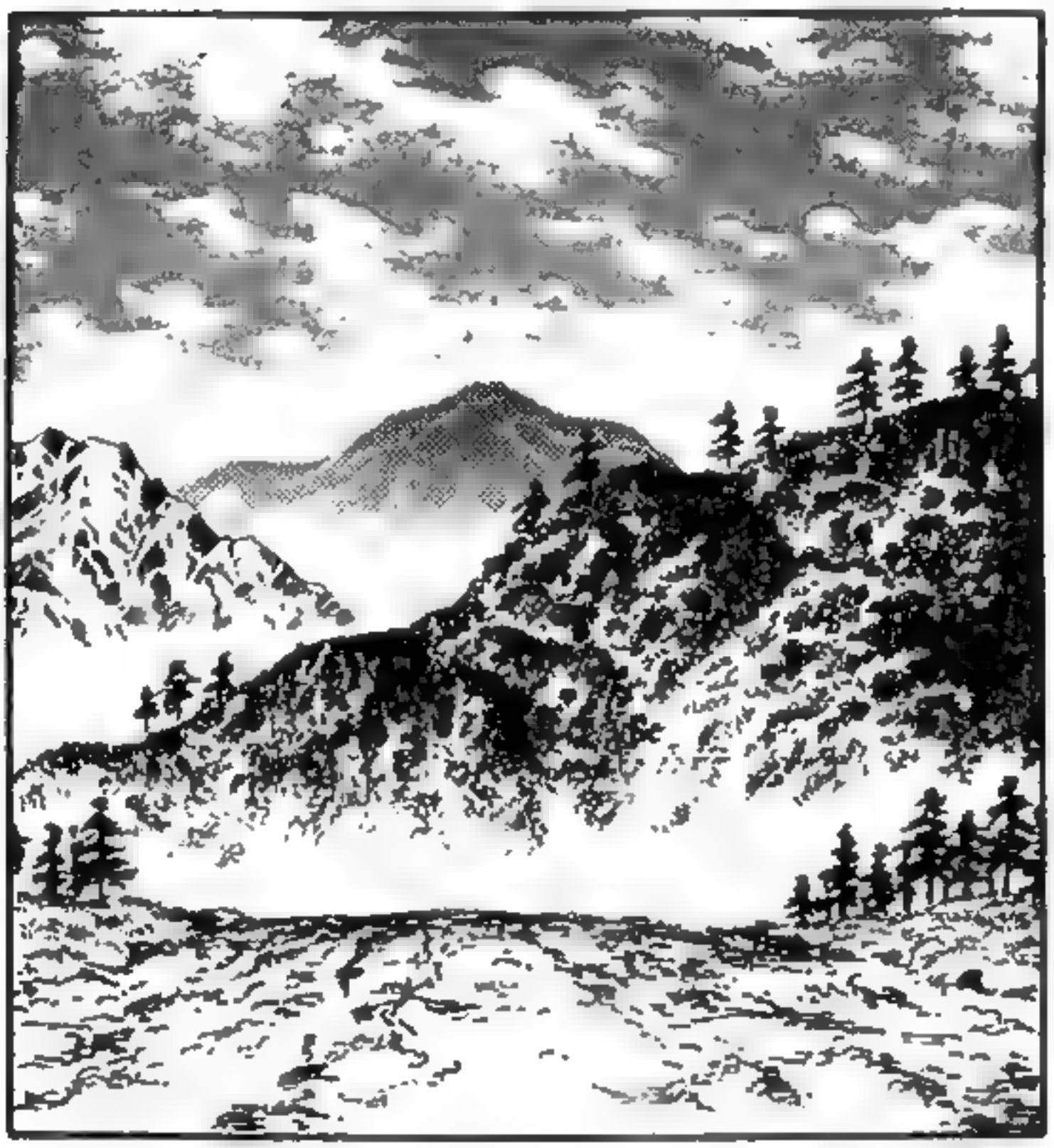

UP AHEAD IS SHIDING, COMMANDER CAO XIU.

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VERY WELL.

PAST THE HILLS OF SHIDING IS THE EAST PASS. IF YOU FIRST CONTROL THE HILLS BY MAKING CAMP HERE, THE EAST PASS WILL SOON FALL IN YOUR HANDS.

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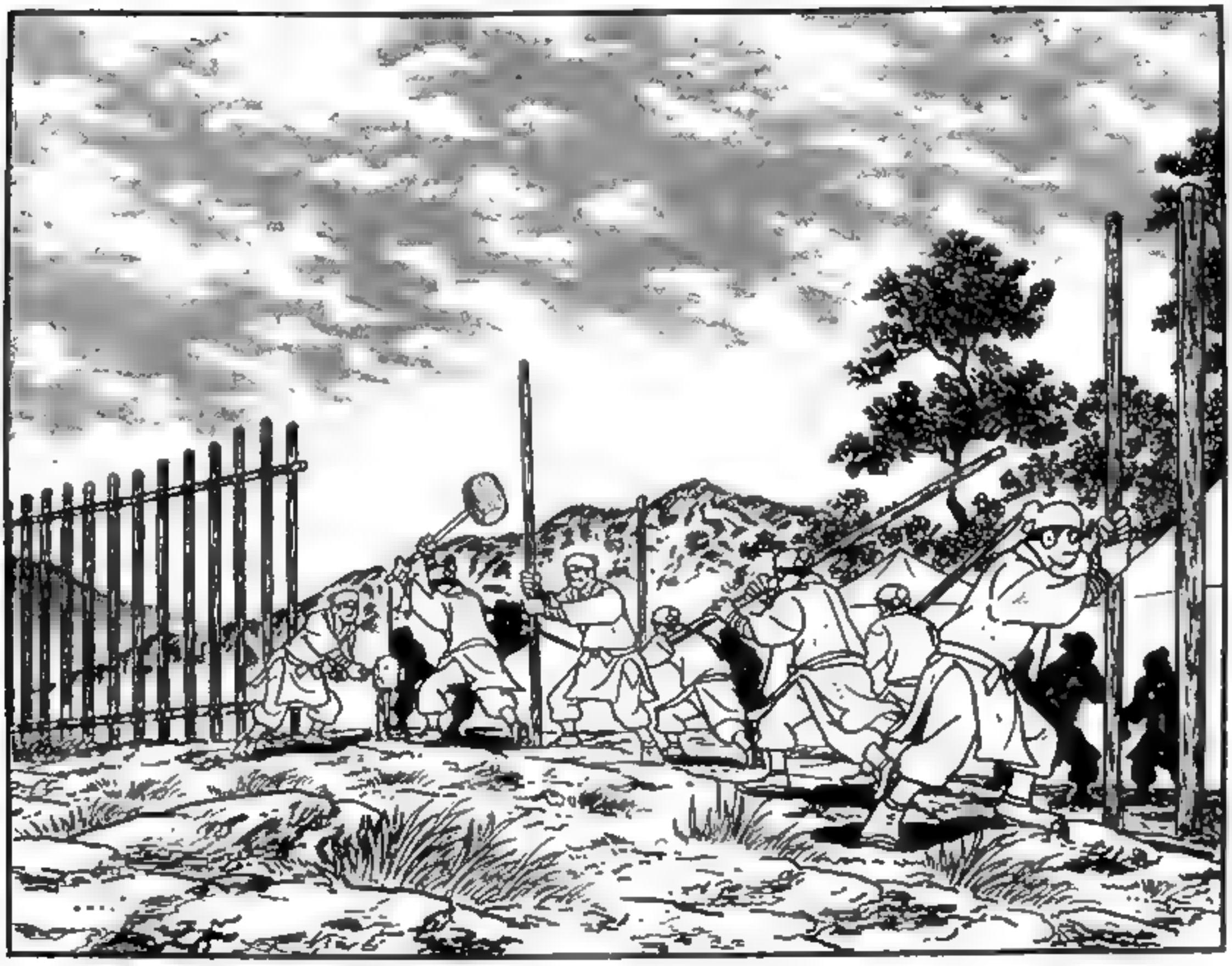
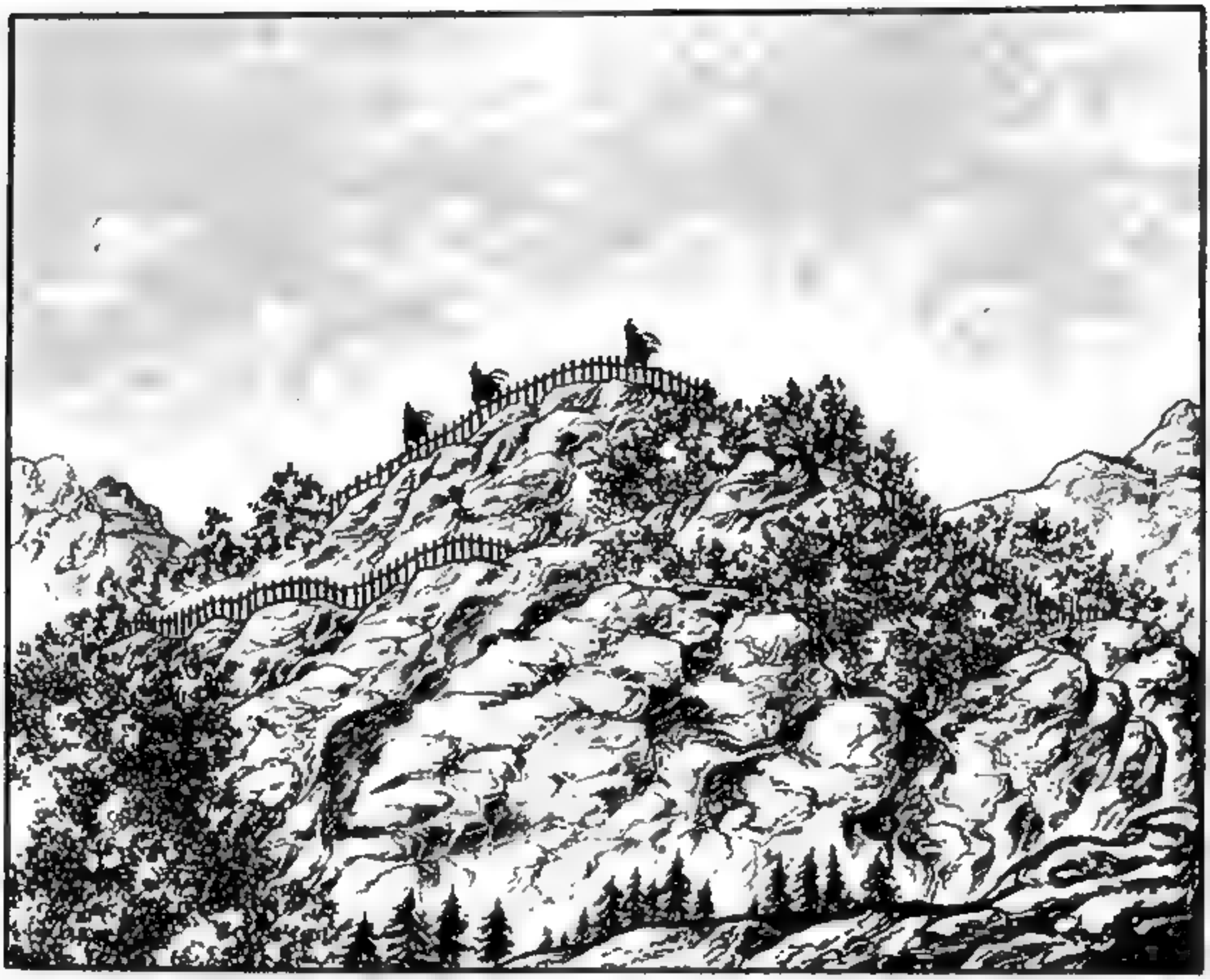
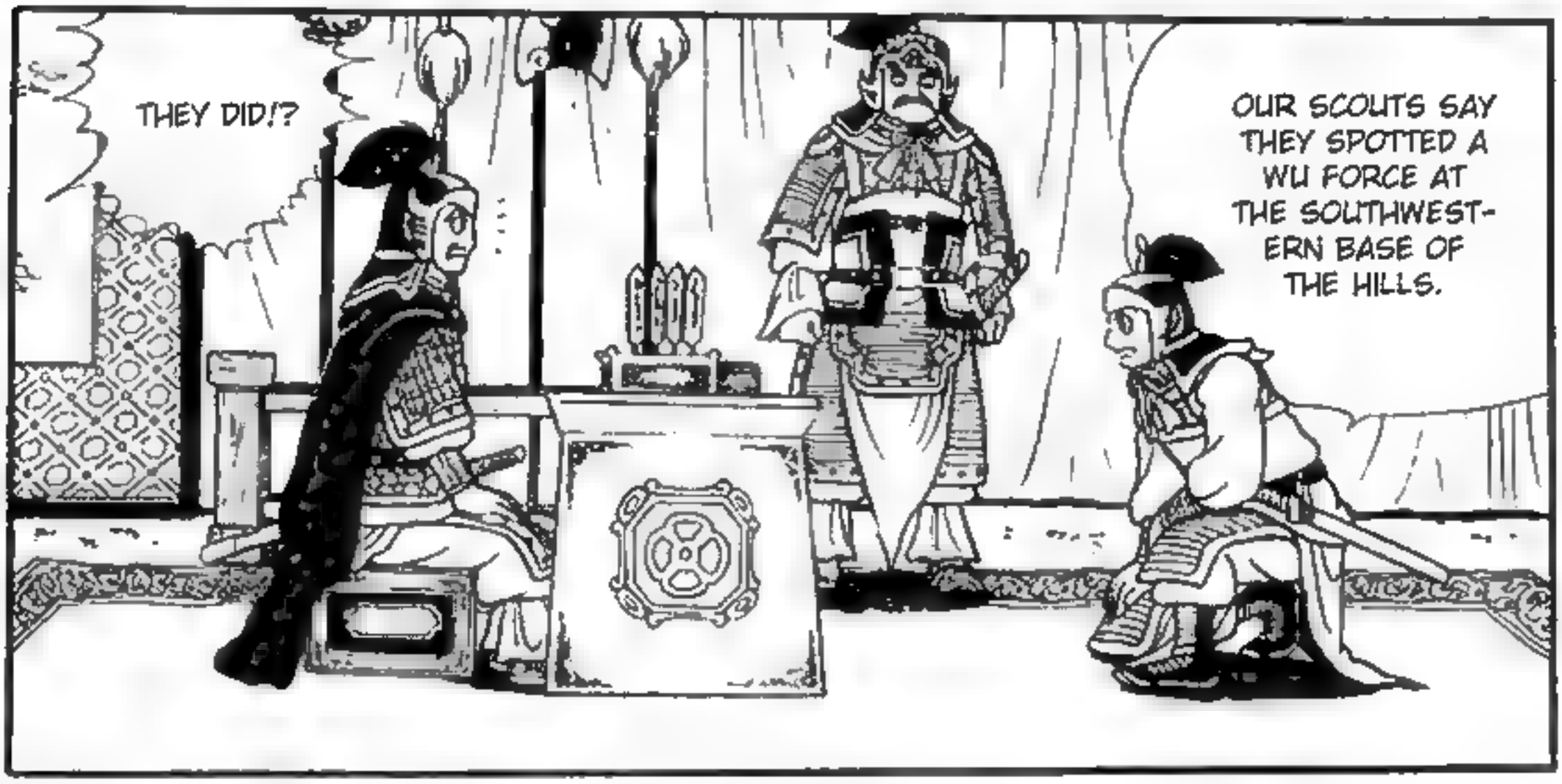
WE WILL MAKE CAMP ON THE HILLS OF SHIDING!



BATTLE OF SHIDING





YES, SIR.

CALL ZHOU FANG.

BUT ZHOU FANG ASSURED ME THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY ENEMIES AROUND HERE...

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EXCUSE ME, SIR.

WHERE DID HE GO?

IS ANYONE HERE?

WE SAW HIM RIDING OFF WITH ABOUT 10 OF HIS ATTENDANTS LAST NIGHT.
HAVE ANY OF YOU SEEN ZHOU FANG?

YES, WE WERE ACTUALLY DISCUSSING WHERE HE RODE OFF TO JUST NOW.

HE LEFT THE CAMP WITH HIS ATTENDANTS!?

THIS IS BAD!

WHAT!?

COMMANDER CAO XIU! ZHOU FANG LEFT THE CAMPS LAST NIGHT AND IS NOW NOWHERE TO BE FOUND!

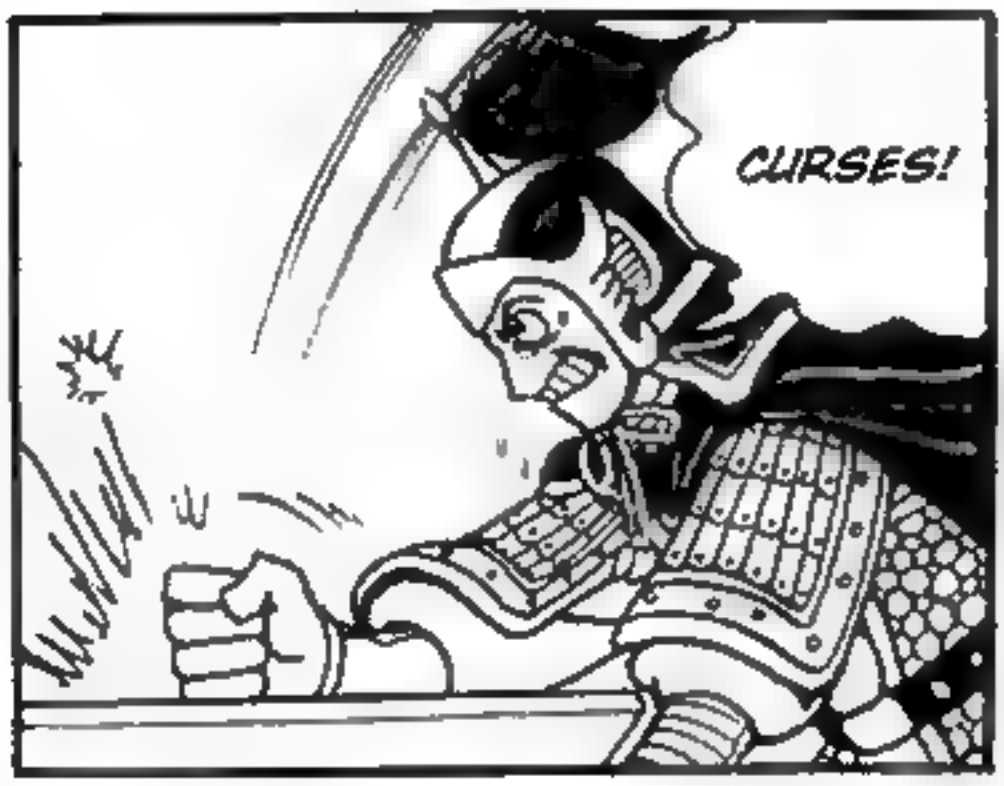
IT'S NOT JUST HIM, SIR. ALL OF HIS PERSONAL ATTENDANTS HAVE VANISHED TOO.

MAYBE HE SIMPLY WANTED TO CHECK THE LOCAL AREA?

THEN THAT BASTARD WENT AS FAR AS TO EVEN CUT HIS HAIR TO TRY AND TRICK ME...!

WHAT!

ZHANG PU!


CURSES!

WE MAY HAVE BEEN LURED INTO A TRAP, BUT OUR TROOPS ARE BOTH STRONG AND PLENTY. LEAD THE VANGUARD AND SHOW THEM WHAT WE ARE MADE OF!
YES?

ZHANG PU LED SEVERAL THOUSAND MEN TO SKIRMISH AGAINST THE WU FORCES

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ATTACK!

GOOD, IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK.
GENERAL XU SHENG, A BODY OF ENEMY TROOPS ARE COMING DOWN FROM THE HILLS.

THE ENEMY FORCES ARE LARGER THAN WE ANTICI-PATED, SIR!

HM?

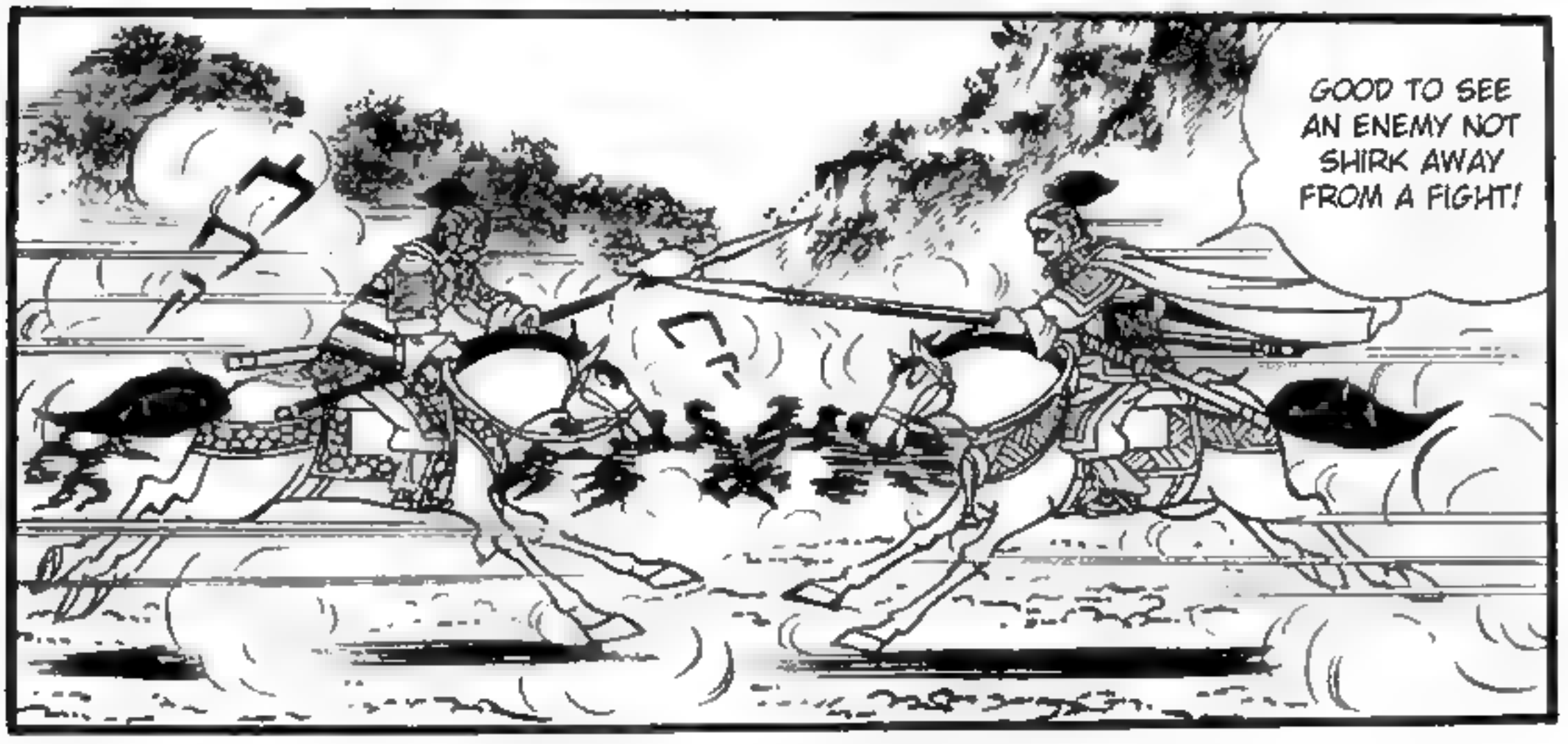
ATTACK! ATTACK!

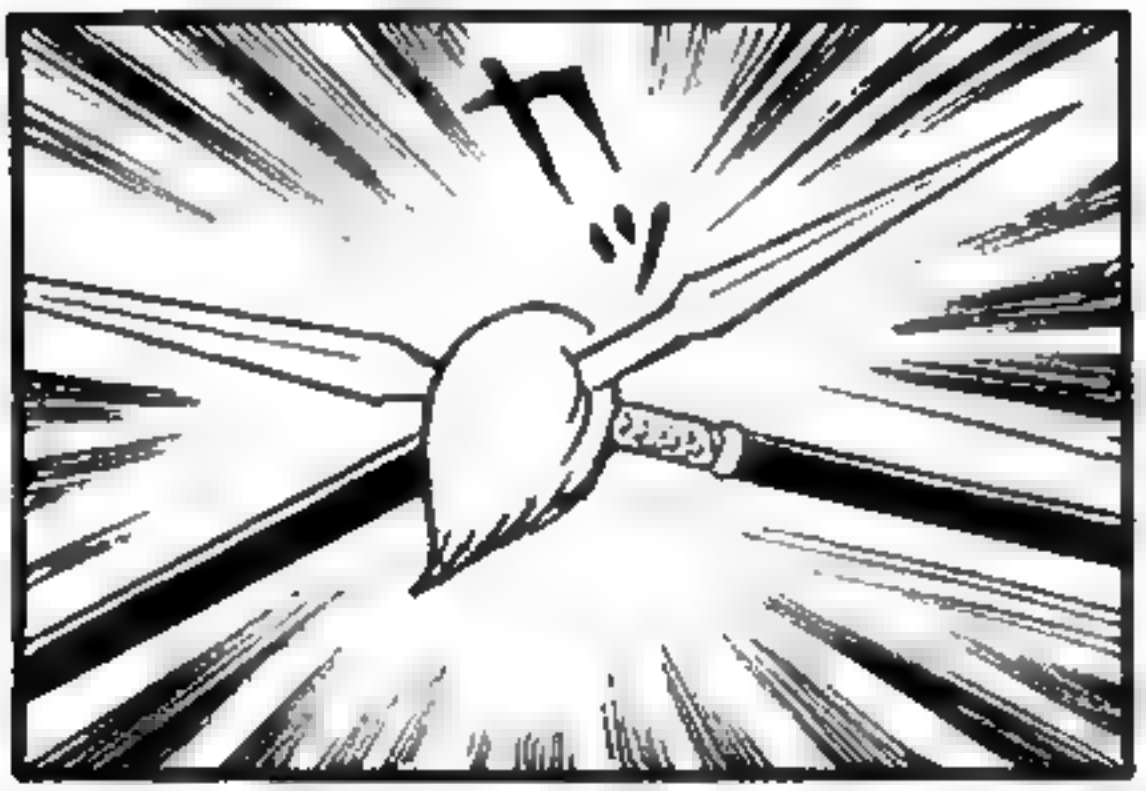
WHO IS YOUR LEADER!? I, XU SHENG, DARE YOU TO FIGHT ME!

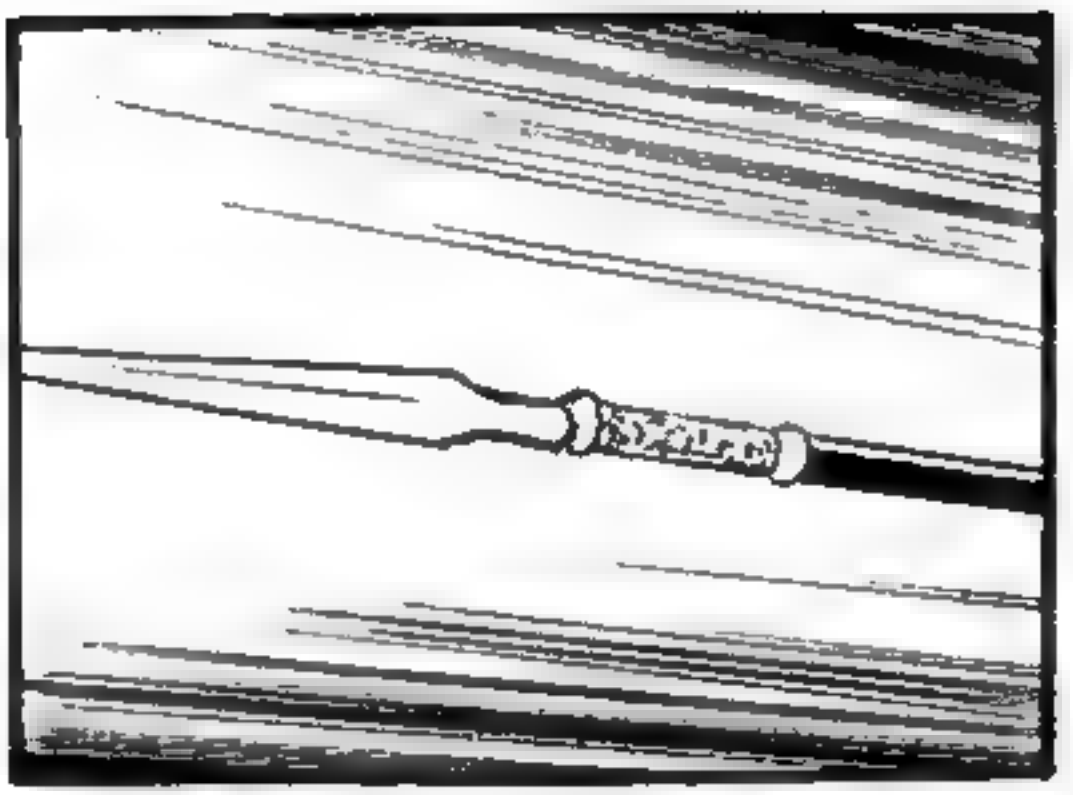
CLEAR THE WAY! YOU'RE NOT EVEN WORTH MY SPEAR!

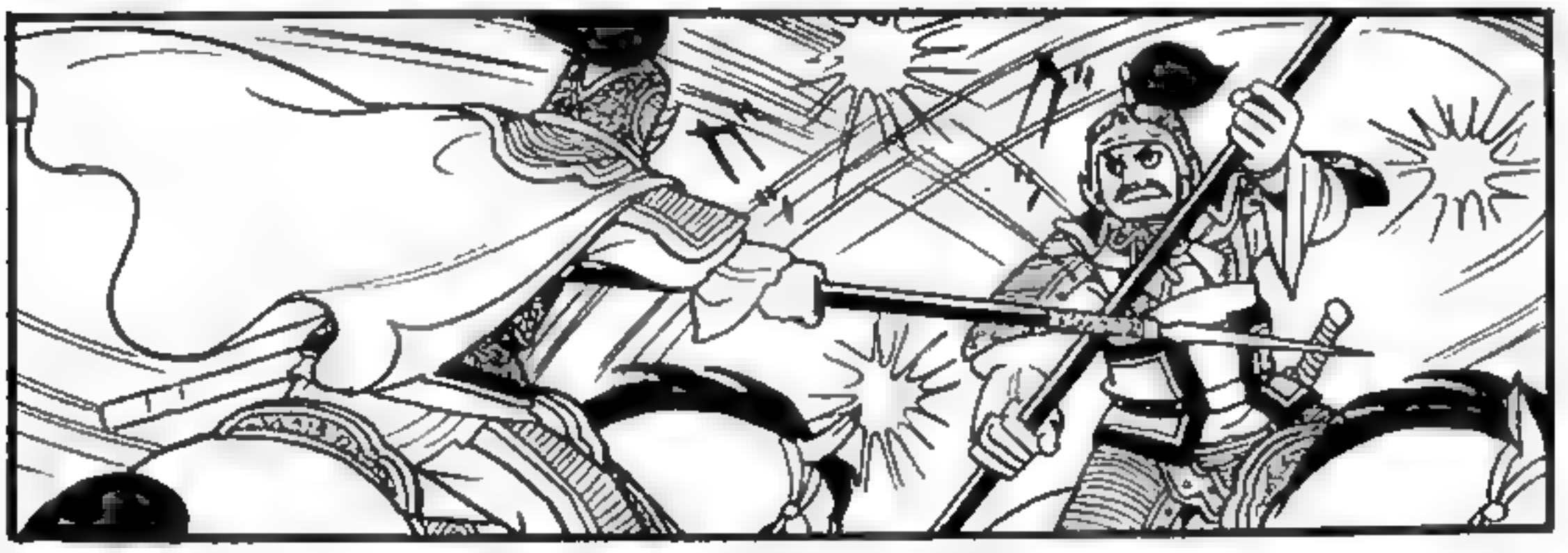
ENOUGH TALK! I, ZHANG PU, AM RIGHT HERE!

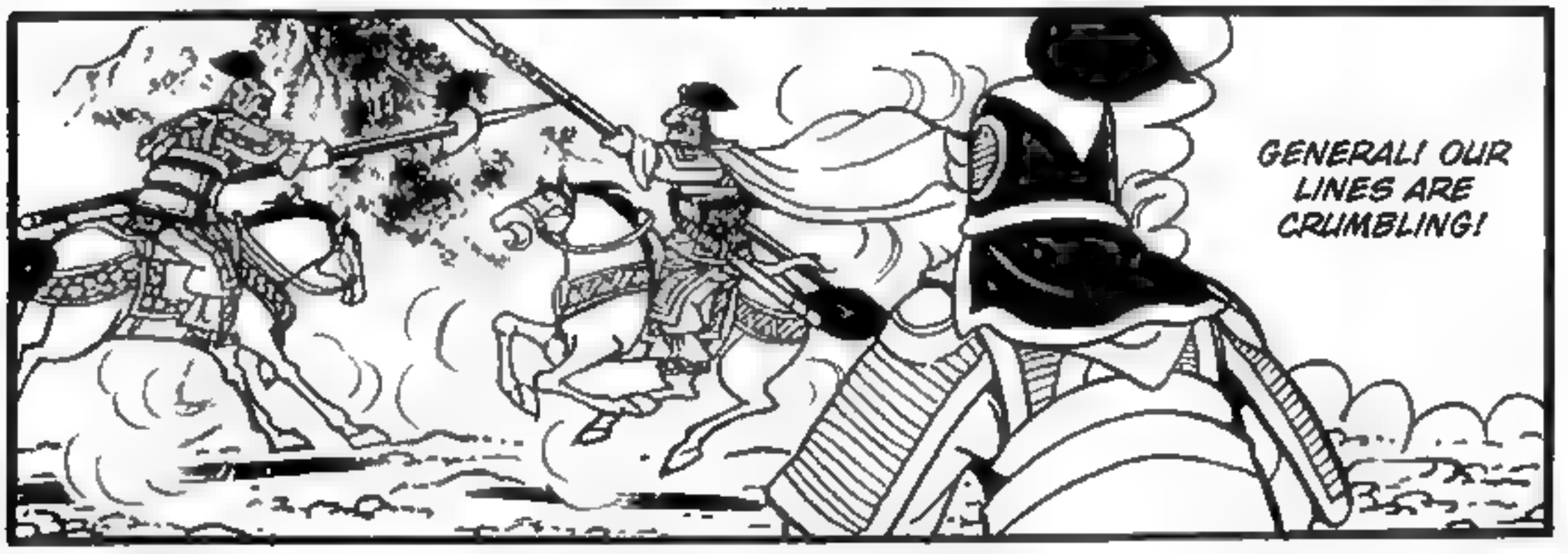
WHERE IS YOUR GENERAL!?


GOOD TO SEE AN ENEMY NOT SHIRK AWAY FROM A FIGHT!







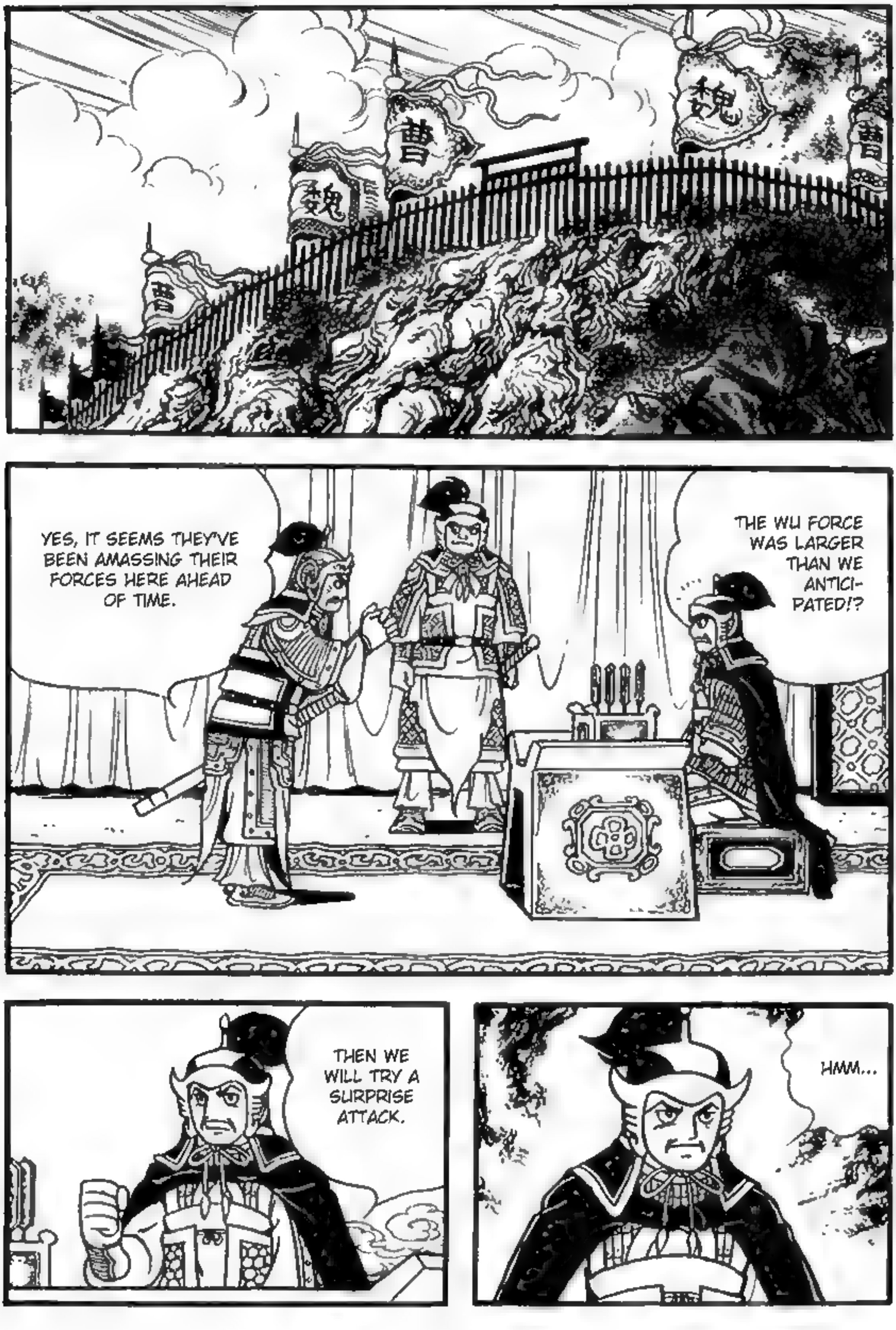

GENERAL! OUR LINES ARE CRUMBLING!

WE WILL SETTLE THIS ANOTHER DAY, XU SHENG!

CURSES! RETREAT!

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR US TOO NOW! WITHDRAW!

HA, ALL BARK AND NO BITE.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YES, IT SEEMS THEY'VE BEEN AMASSING THEIR FORCES HERE AHEAD OF TIME.
THE WU FORCE WAS LARGER THAN WE ANTICI-PATED!?
THEN WE WILL TRY A SURPRISE ATTACK.
HMM...

XUE QIAO.

ZHANG PU, SET 20,000 TROOPS UP FOR AN AMBUSH AT SOUTH OF SHIDING.

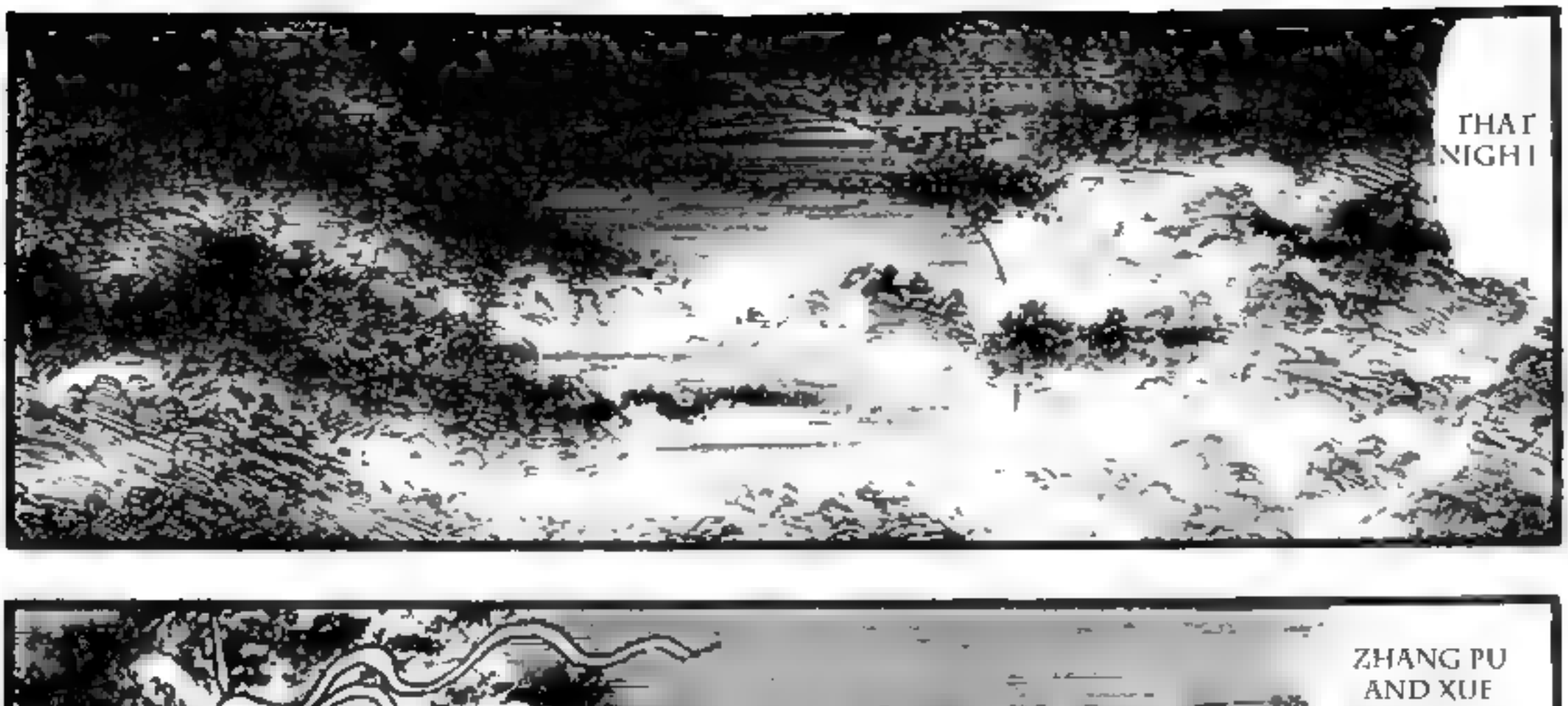
YOU ARE TO DO THE SAME, BUT AT NORTH OF SHIDING.

YES?

YES, SIR.

OUR THREE-PRONGED ATTACK WILL MAKE SHORT WORK OF THESE PESTS.

AS FOR ME, I WILL EXECUTE A FEIGNED RETREAT WITH 1000 TROOPS. UPON MY SIGNAL, YOU WILL SPRING YOUR AMBUSH TO FLANK THE ENEMY ARMY.


THAT NIGHT

ZHANG PU AND XUE QIAO EACH LED 20,000 TROOPS OUT FROM THE CAMPS.

AND HEADED TO THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN SIDES OF SHIDING RESPECTIVELY

MEANWHILE, A SIMILAR SET OF ORDERS WERE HANDED OUT AT THE WU CAMPS

YES, SIR.

YES, SIR.

ZHU HUAN AND QUAN ZONG, TAKE 30,000 TROOPS EACH AND HEAD TO THE REAR OF SHIDING TO SURPRISE THE ENEMY CAMPS AND ANY ENEMIES MANEUVERING OUTSIDE. SIGNAL WITH FIRE WHEN YOU COMMENCE YOUR ATTACK.

YES, SIR.

ONCE I SEE THE SIGNAL, I WILL LEAD THE MAIN FORCES AND SMASH INTO CAO XIU'S TROOPS FROM THE FRONT. THE OUT-NUMBERED ENEMIES WILL QUICKLY FALL TO THIS THREE-PRONGED ATTACK.

THAT NIGHT, THE WU GENERALS ALSO MOVED INTO POSITION

*FLAG (張普) READS ZHANG PU

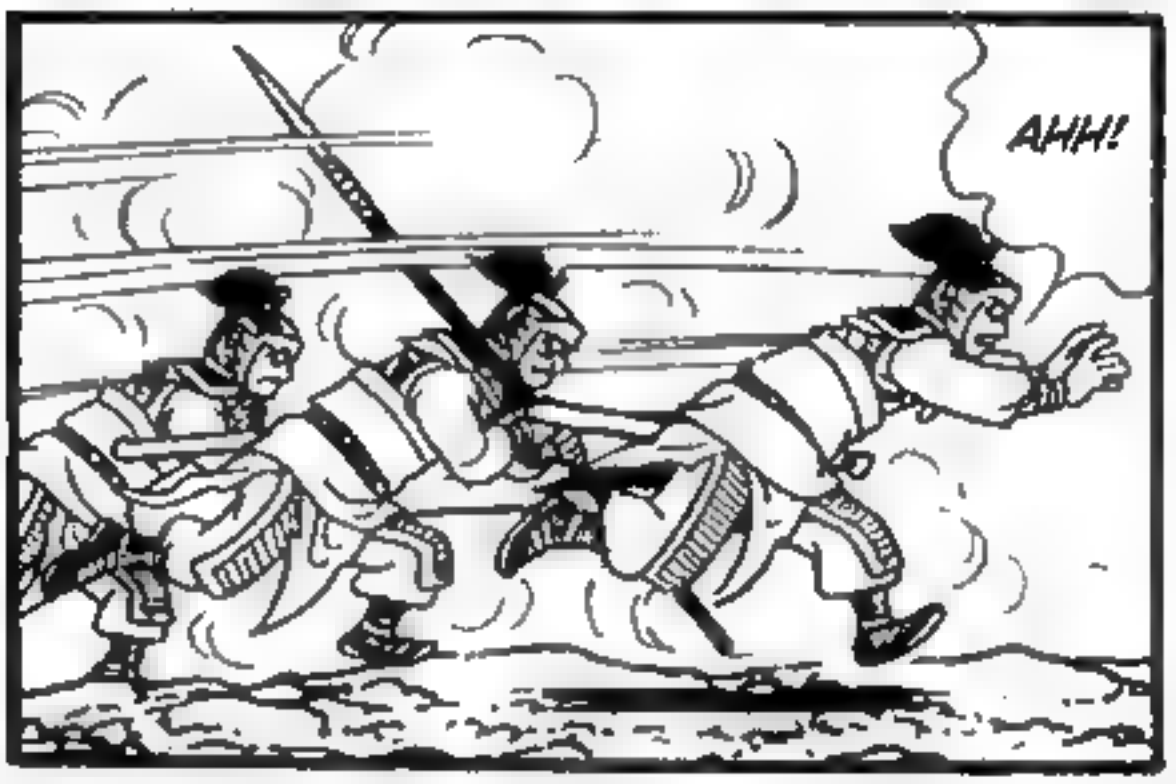
WHOSE UNIT ARE YOU A PART OF!? DID I NOT WARN ALL CAPTAINS NOT TO MOVE OUT FROM THEIR POSITIONS UNTIL I GIVE THE SIGNAL!?

ZHU HUAN OF WU.

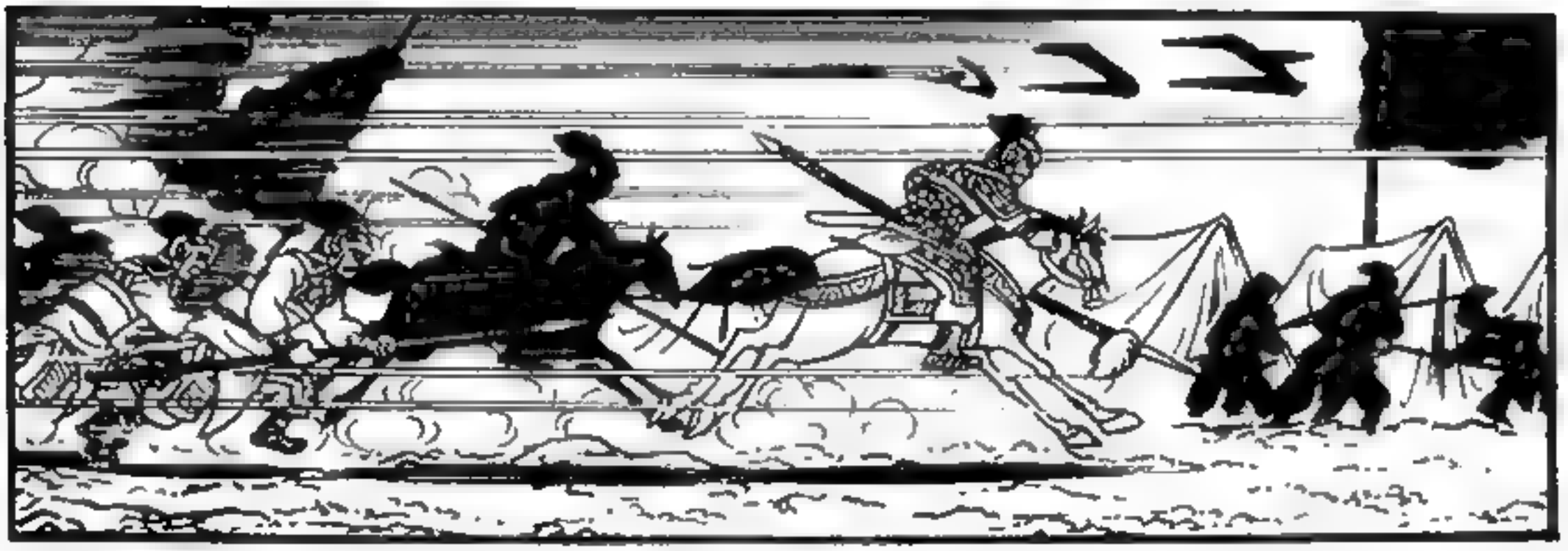
NAME YOURSELF AND THE UNIT YOU BELONG TO NOW!

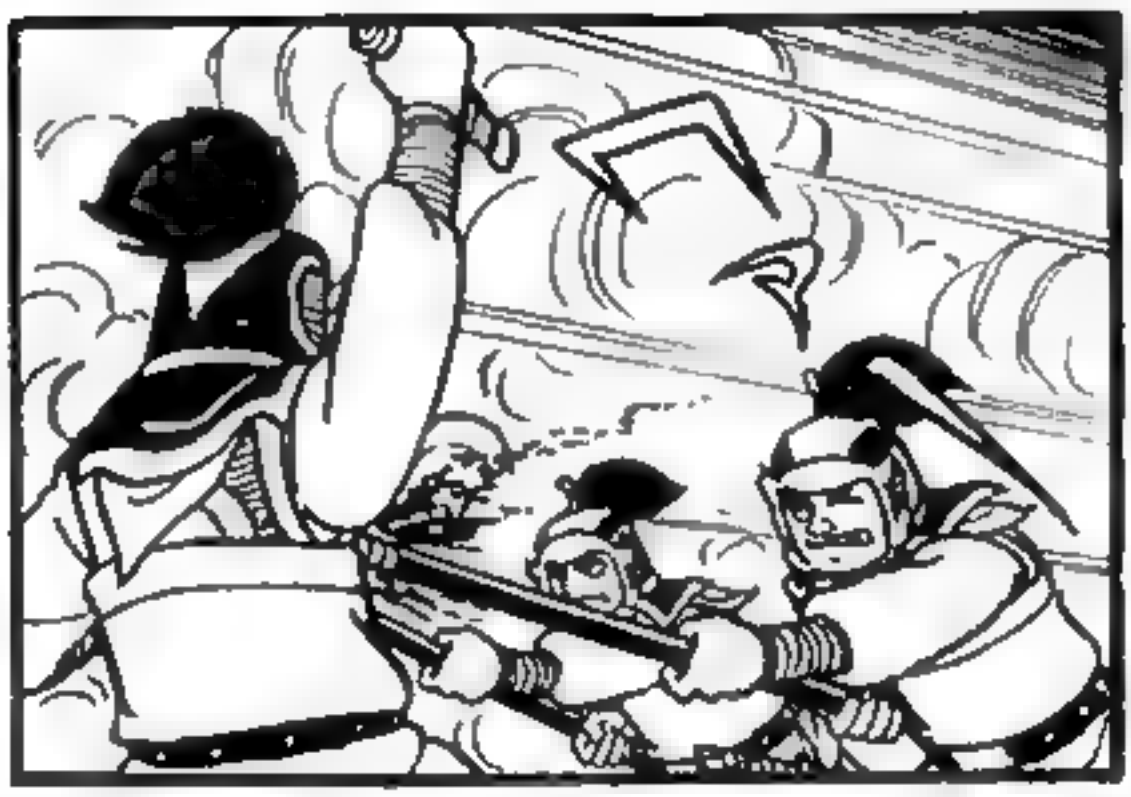
W-WU!?

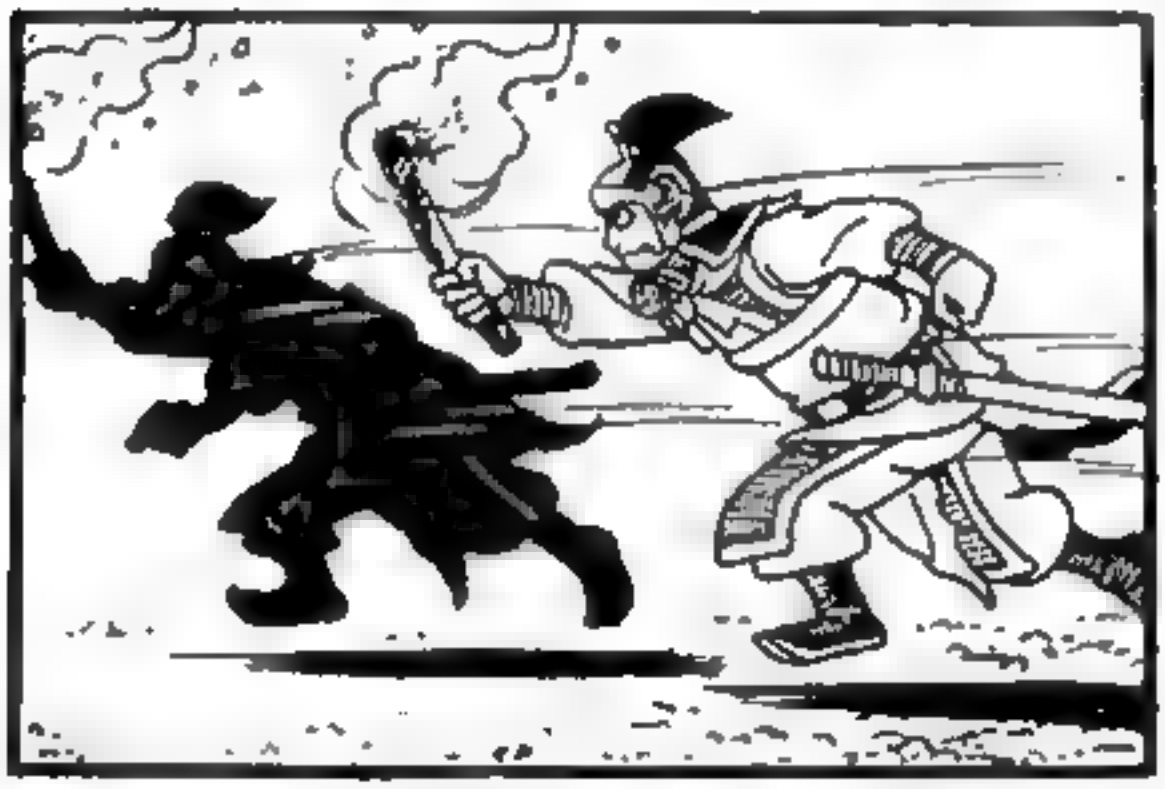
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!


AHH!

THE ENEMIES ARE HERE ALREADY!?

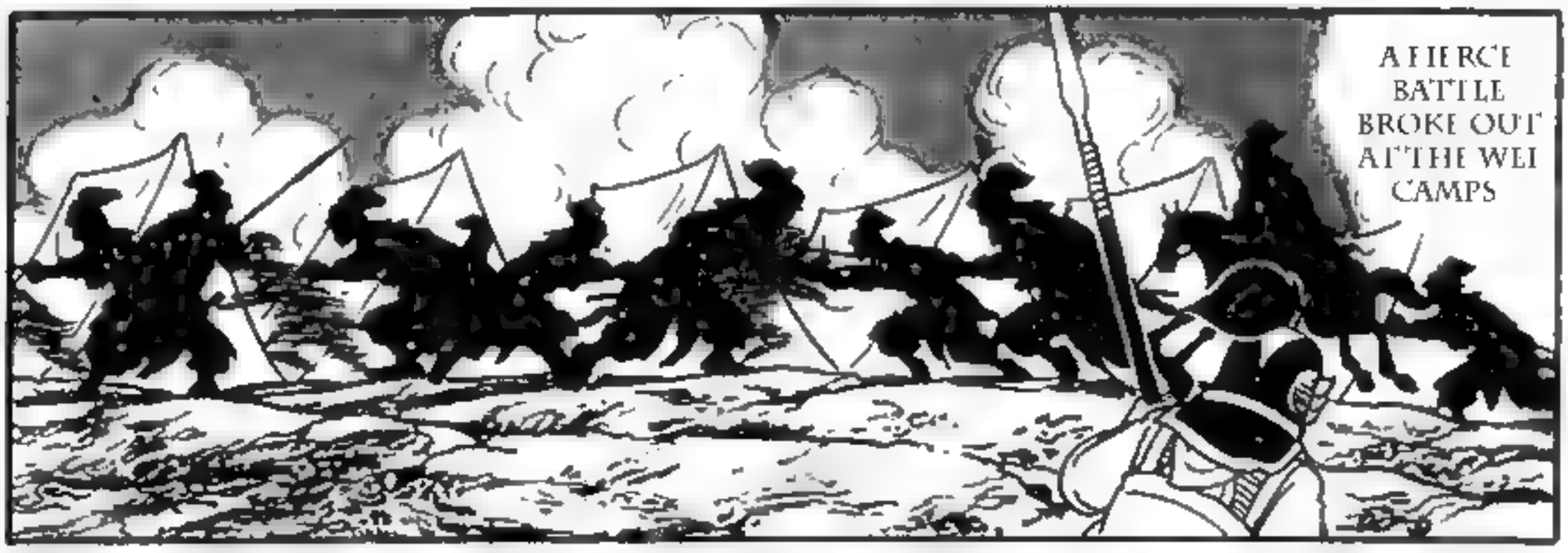


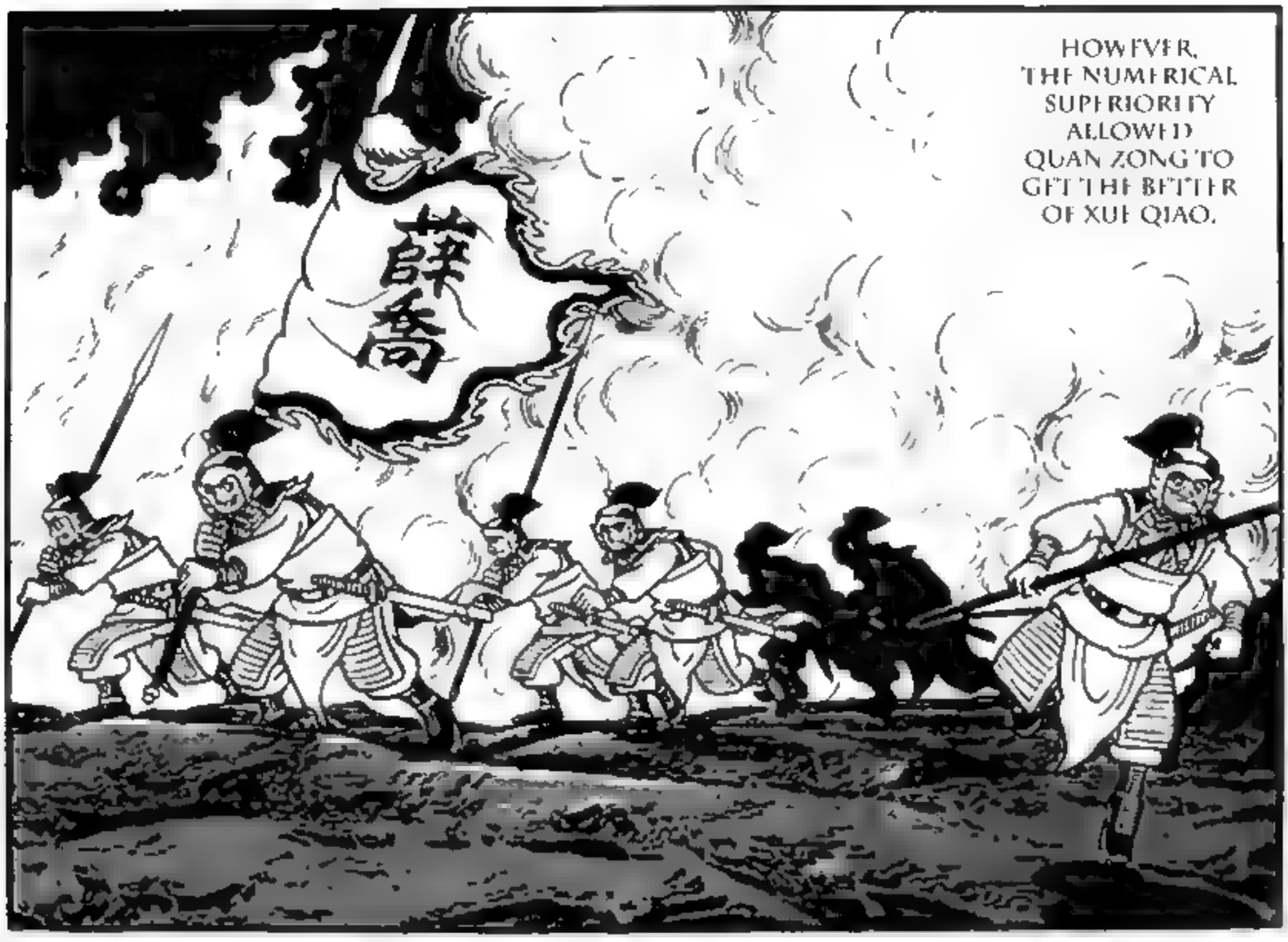




LIGHT THE FIRE!

AT THE SAME TIME, QUAN ZONG S TROOPS ENGAGED XUE QIAO S TROOPS


A FIERCE BATTLE BROKE OUT AT THE WEI CAMPS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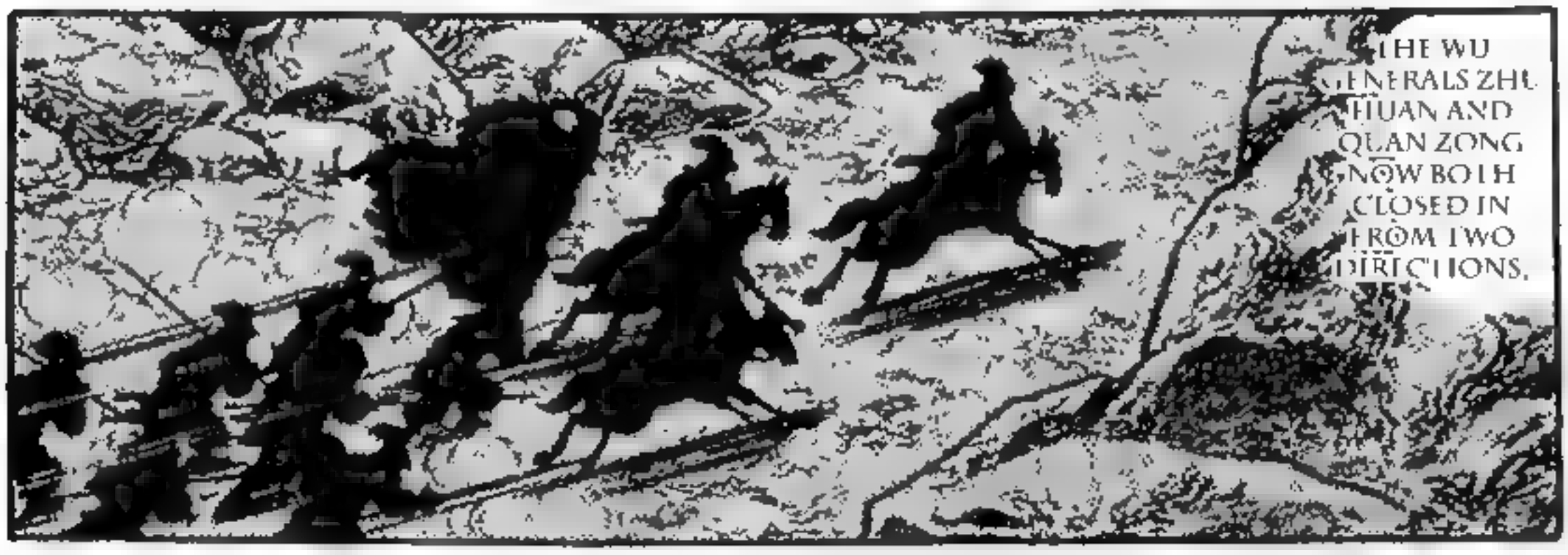
HOWEVER, THE NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY ALLOWED QUAN ZONG TO GET THE BETTER OF XUE QIAO.


THE WU GENERALS ZHU HUAN AND QUAN ZONG NOW BOTH CLOSED IN FROM TWO DIRECTIONS.

TO THE MAIN WEI CAMPS UNDER CAO XIU'S CONTROL

THE WEI CAMPS WERE THROWN INTO CHAOS

COMMANDER, WE'RE BEING ATTACKED FROM THREE SIDES! THEY'LL ANNHILATE US AT THIS RATE!

WHAT!?

COMMANDER! AN EVEN BIGGER WU FORCE HAS COME TO ATTACK OUR CENTER!

ABANDON CAMPS AND RETREAT!

AHH!

SO IS THIS WHERE I MEET MY END...?

ENEMIES HERE AS WELL!?

?

IS THAT COMMANDER CAO XIU BEFORE ME!?

JIA KUI!

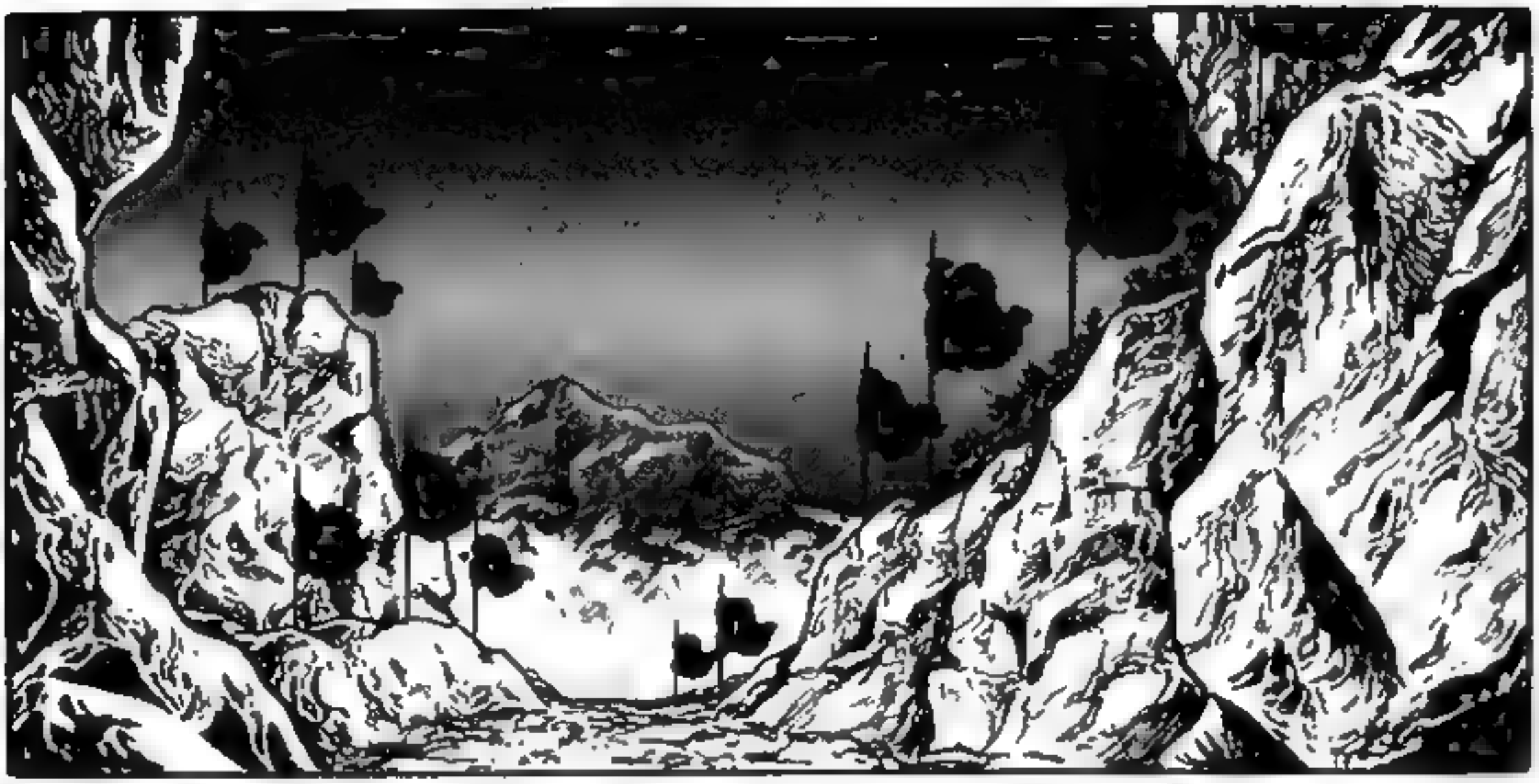
F... FORGIVE ME... HAD I HEEDED YOUR ADVICE, I WOULD NOT BE IN THIS MESS RIGHT NOW.

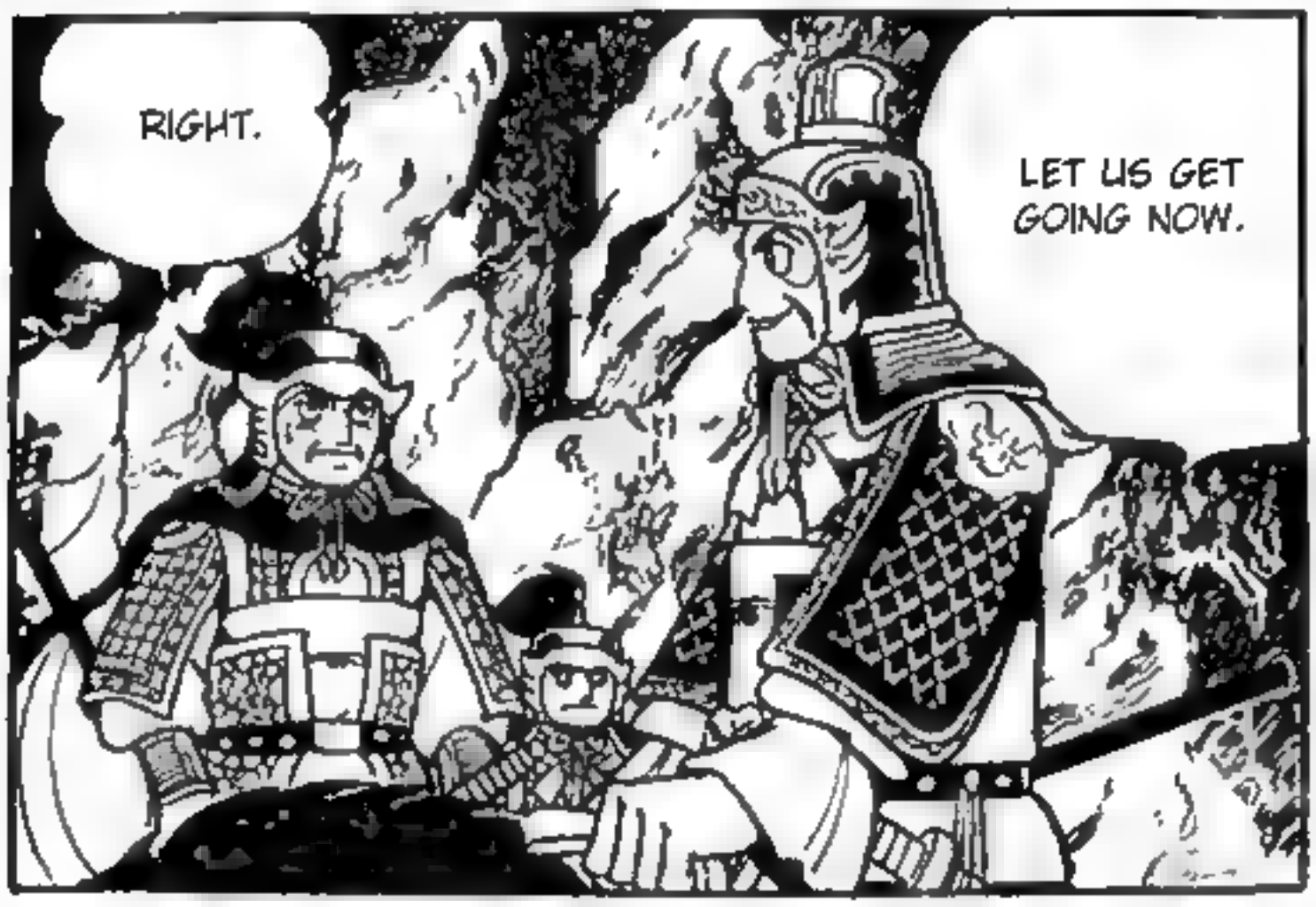
I KNOW YOU ORDERED ME TO STAY BEHIND, BUT I COULD NOT SHAKE MY SUSPICION TOWARDS ZHOU FENG SO I RUSHED OVER HERE, WILLING TO ACCEPT ANY PUNISHMENT IF I WERE PROVED WRONG.

WE MUST PRIORITIZE OUR RETREAT RIGHT NOW BEFORE THE WU FORCES CATCH UP.

YES, SIR!

PLANT OUR FLAGS ON THESE SLOPES!




RIGHT.
LET US GET GOING NOW.

GOOD, THAT SHOULD HOLD THEM OFF FOR A WHILE.

AH!

HM?

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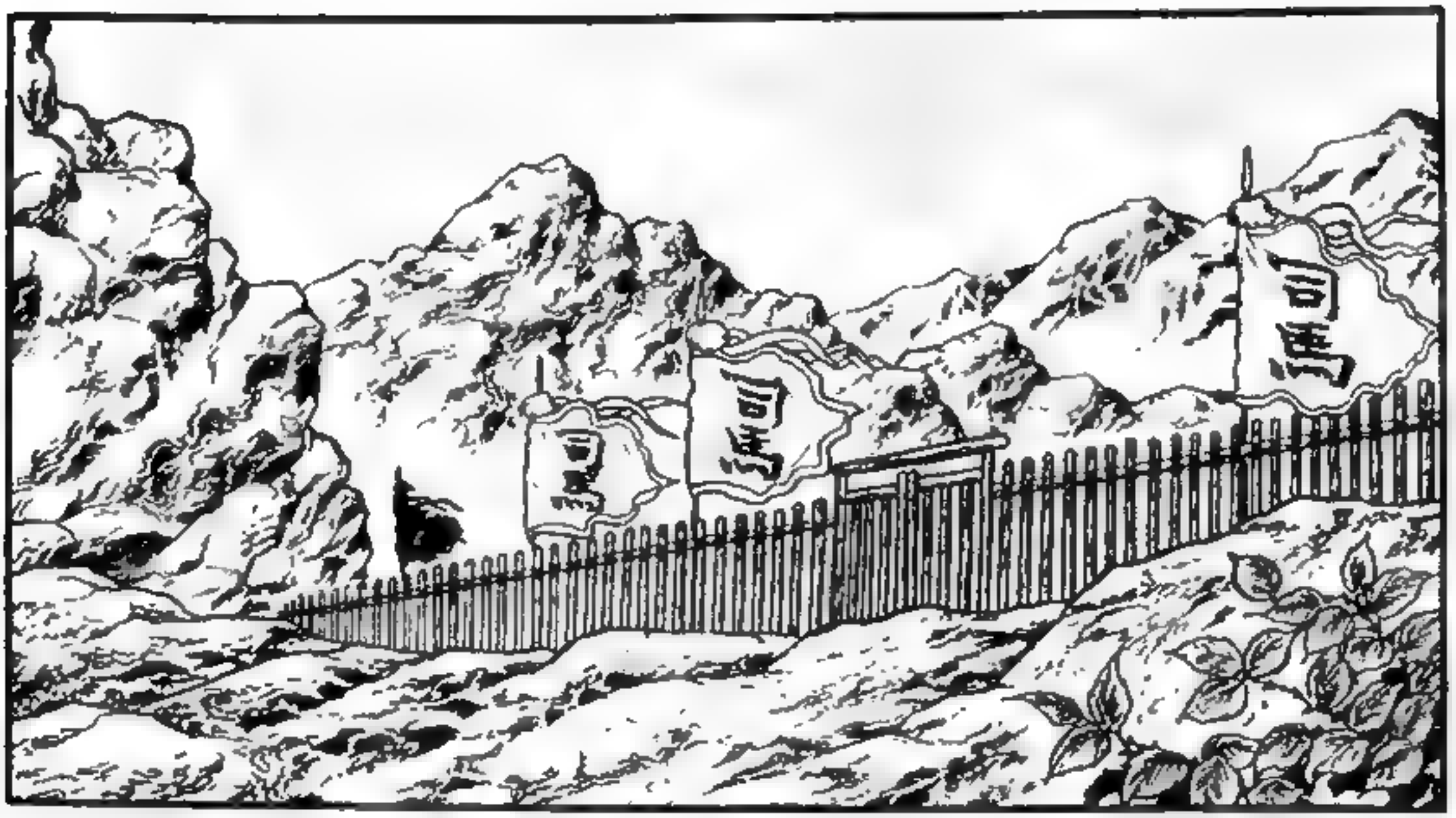
YES...

THEY MUST BE WEI REIN-FORCEMENTS.

THIS FRESH ENEMY ARMY IS LIKELY WELL PREPARED TO HANDLE ATTACKS. THE NARROW ROADS HERE ARE ALSO IDEAL FOR AMBUSHES. IT'S A SHAME CAO XIU GOT AWAY, BUT WE'VE STILL INFLICTED MUCH DAMAGE.

NO.
SHALL WE KEEP CHARGING?

WITHDRAW!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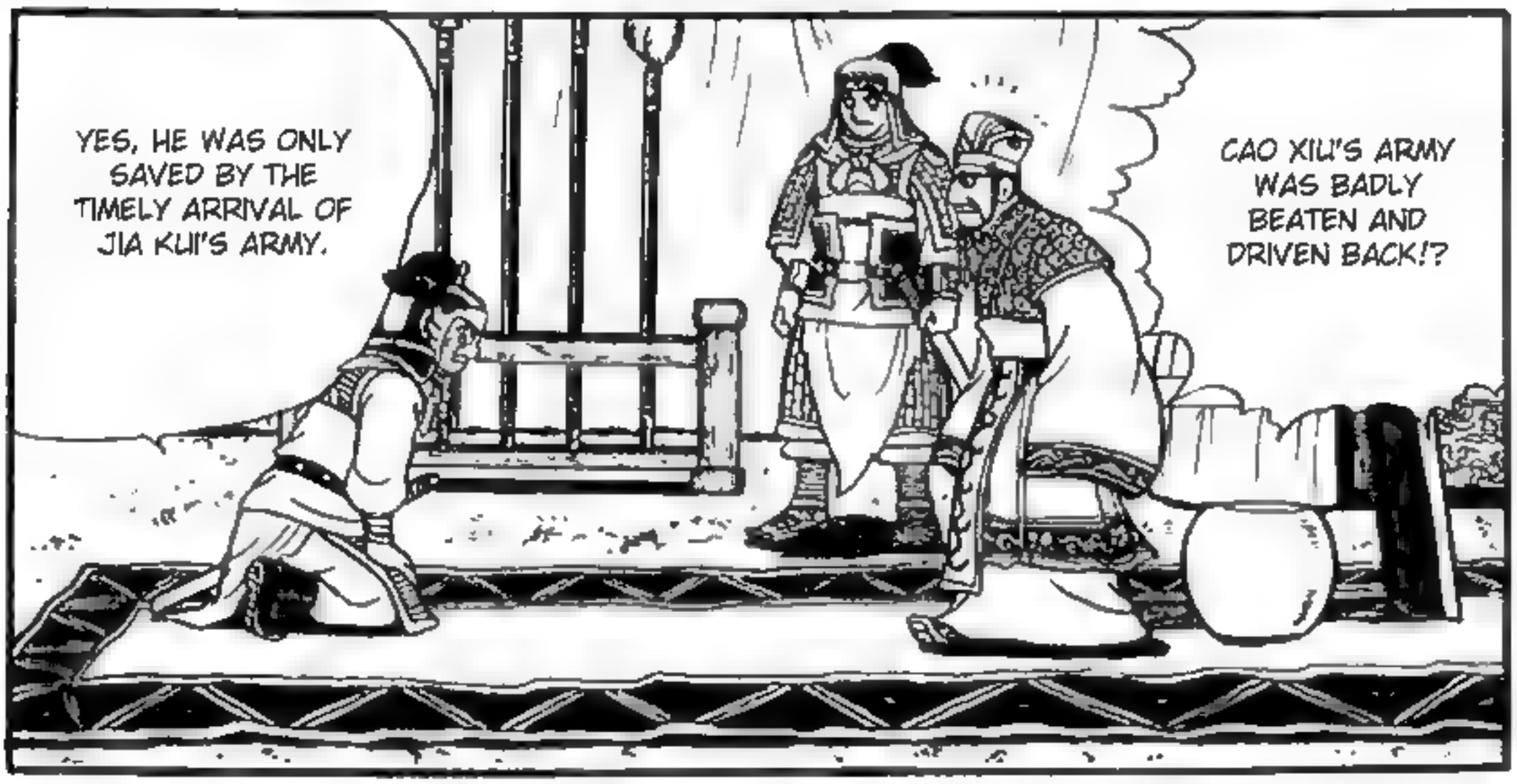

YES, HE WAS ONLY SAVED BY THE TIMELY ARRIVAL OF JIA KUI'S ARMY.
CAO XIU'S ARMY WAS BADLY BEATEN AND DRIVEN BACK!?

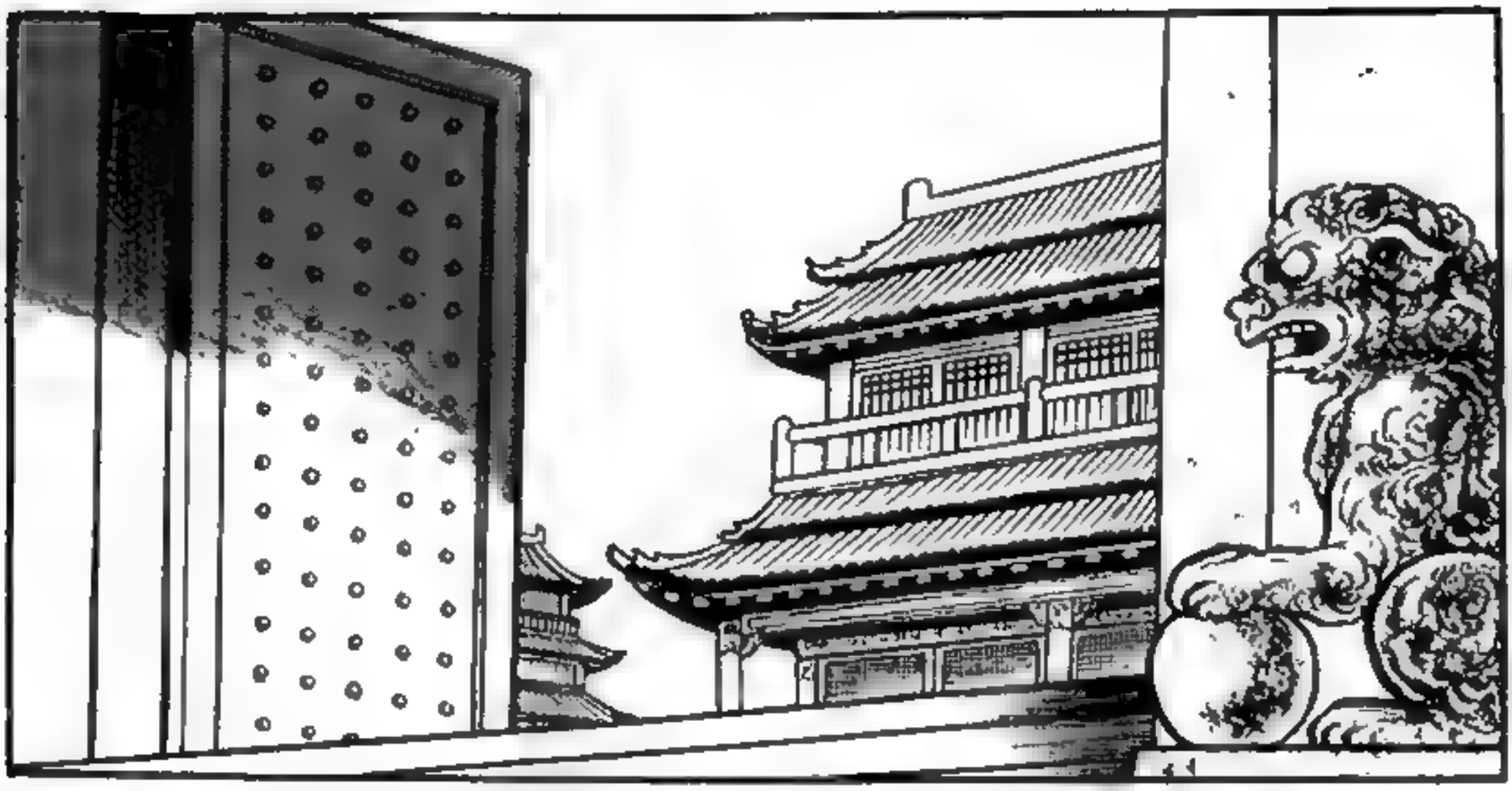
IF CAO XIU'S ARMY HAS RETIRED, THEN IT IS BEST FOR US TO DO SO AS WELL.

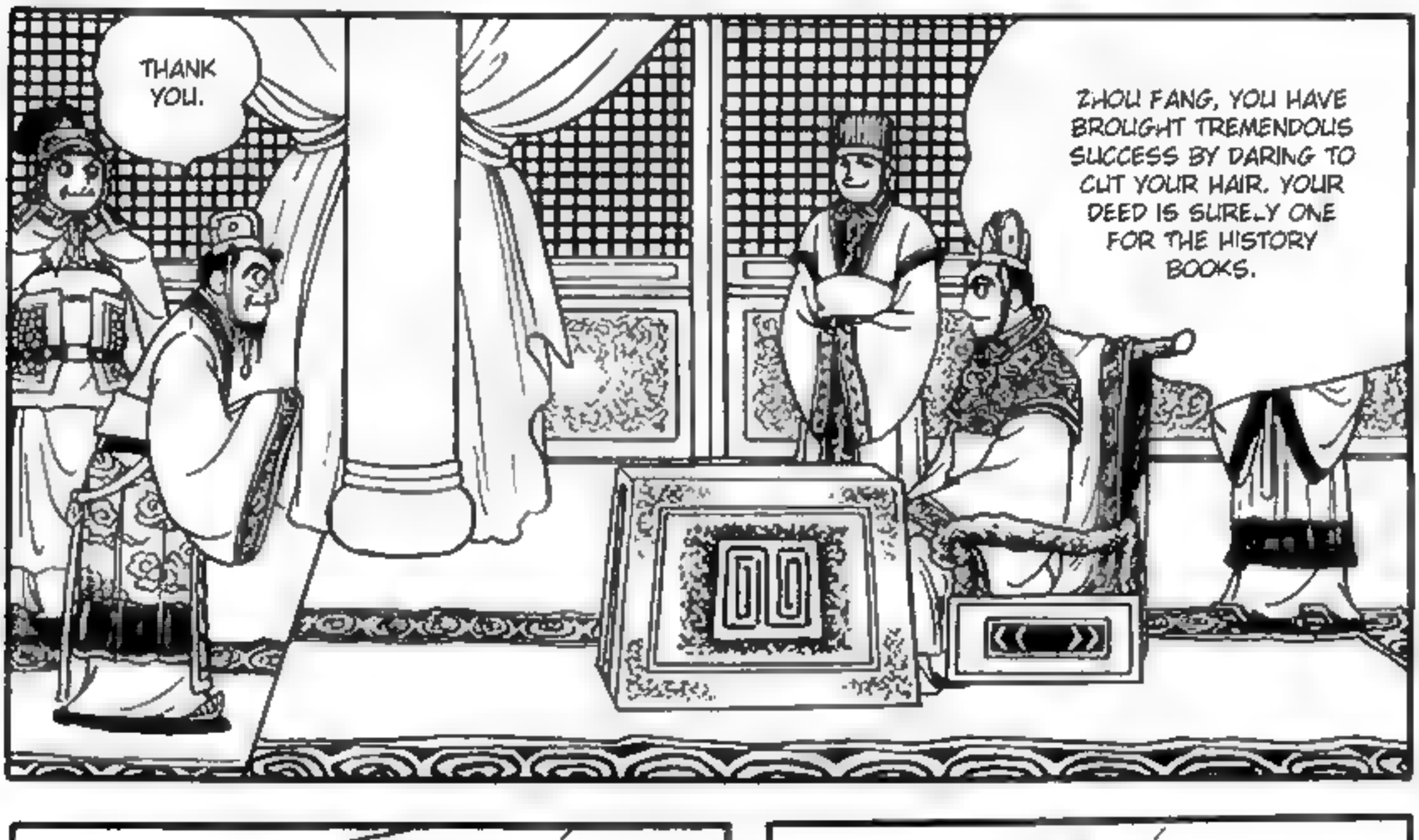
SO EVERYTHING IS AS JIA KUI FEARED...

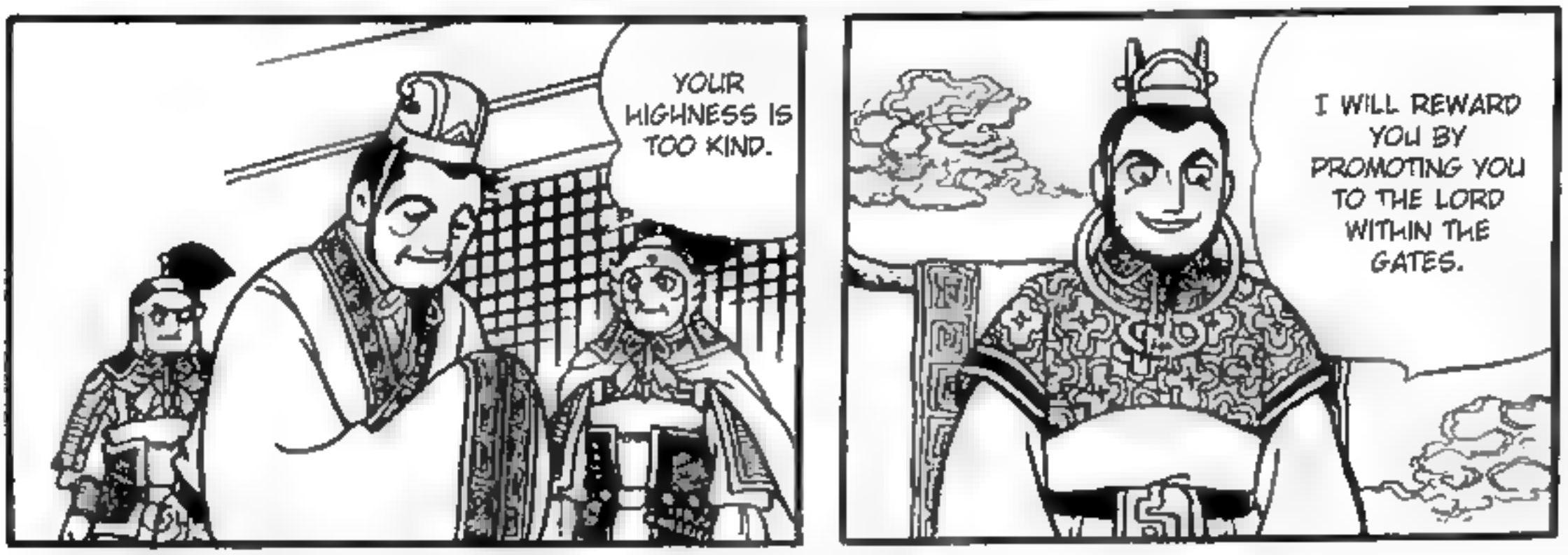
YES, FATHER.
OUR ENEMY IS NOT WU ALONE. WE CANNOT AFFORD A LONG PROTRACTED CONFLICT WITH WU WHEN SHU IS POISED TO STRIKE OUR REAR VERY SOON.

THUS SIMA YI'S ARMY ALSO DECIDED TO RETREAT BACK TO WEI

THE INVASION OF WU WAS DECISIVELY ABORTED THE LOSS OF CAO XIU'S CAMPS GAVE WU AN ASTOUNDING AMOUNT OF HORSES AND WAGONS FILLED WITH FOOD, ARMS, AND ARMOUR. EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE WERE THE PRISONERS OF WAR TAKEN, WHICH NUMBERED IN THE TENS OF THOUSANDS




THANK YOU.
ZHOU FANG, YOU HAVE BROUGHT TREMENDOUS SUCCESS BY DARING TO CUT YOUR HAIR. YOUR DEED IS SURELY ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS.

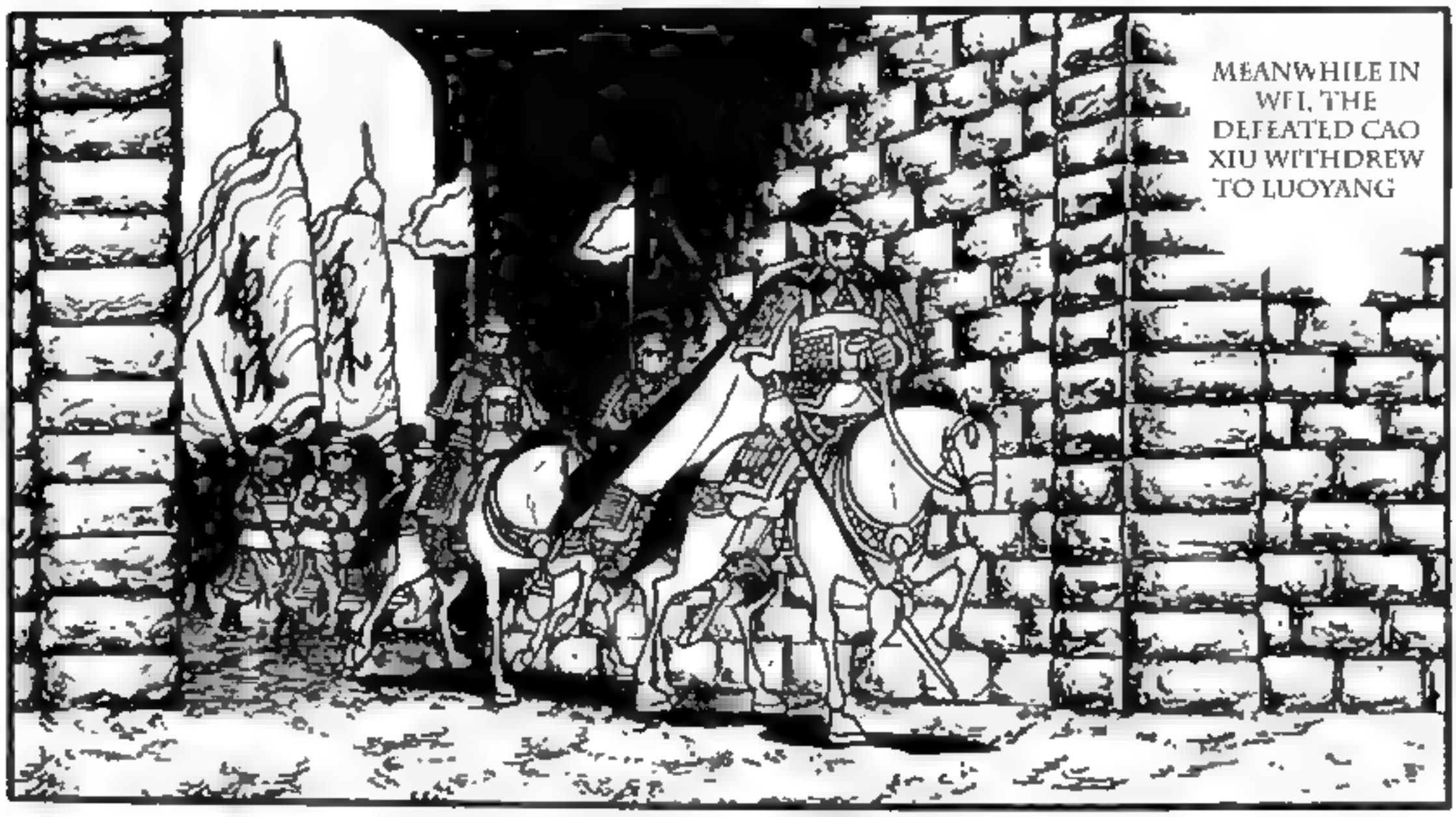


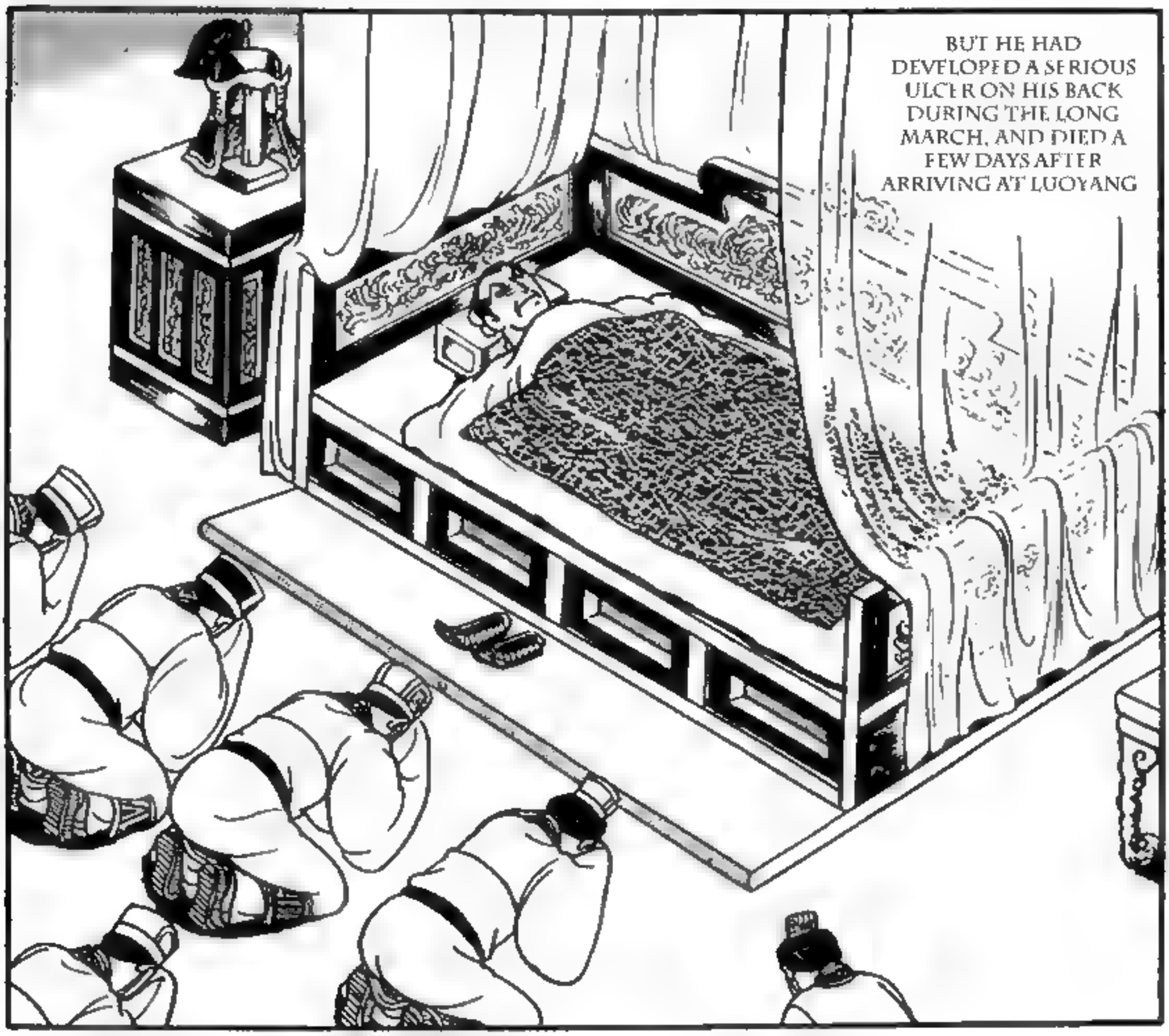
*LORD WITHIN THE GATES: THE 19TH RANK OF THE 20-RANK NOBILITY SYSTEM USED DURING HAN TIMES. AS THE SECOND LOWEST RANK, IT DOES NOT COME WITH AN ENTITLED FIEF. INSTEAD, THE HOLDER WOULD SERVE THE CAPITAL PALACE. HENCE THE NAME "WITHIN THE GATES."

YES, I WILL DO SO.

YOUR HIGHNESS, WITH THE GREAT DEFEAT WEI HAS JUST SUFFERED, THE TIME IS RIPE FOR SHU TO INVADE WEI ONCE MORE. I RECOMMEND SENDING A LETTER TO ZHUGE LIANG, URGING HIM TO ATTACK.

A WU ENVOY SET OUT FOR SHU AT ONCE


MEANWHILE IN WEI, THE DEFEATED CAO XIU WITHDREW TO LUOYANG


BUT HE HAD DEVELOPED A SERIOUS ULCER ON HIS BACK DURING THE LONG MARCH, AND DIED A FEW DAYS AFTER ARRIVING AT LUOYANG

SIMA YI AND HIS ARMY ALSO RETURNED SHORTLY AFTER TO LUOYANG
司馬
HE DIED FROM DEVELOPING A LARGE ULCER ON HIS BACK, WHICH THEN SPREAD OVER THE REST OF HIS BODY.
I SEE...
YES.
CAO XIU PASSED AWAY A FEW DAYS AGO!?

YES, WHY DID YOU RUSH BACK HERE WITHOUT FIGHTING?

SIMA YI, ARE YOU NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAILURE OF THIS CAMPAIGN WHICH LED TO CAO XIU'S UNFORTUNATE PASSING?

I FEARED ZHUGE LIANG WOULD LAUNCH ANOTHER CAMPAIGN UPON HEARING OUR RECENT DEFEAT. WHO ELSE BUT I CAN DEFEND CHANG'AN FROM THE SHU THREAT?

YES, HE'S CLEARLY TRYING TO FIGHT THE EASIER BATTLES AND CLAIM EVEN MORE MERIT LIKE AT THE BATTLE OF JIETING.

SEEING THAT WU IS STRONG WHILE SHU IS WEAK, HE'S TRYING TO TAKE THE EASY JOB!

HMPH, BIG TALK COMING FROM SOMEONE WHO FLED FROM WU WITHOUT EVEN FIGHTING...!

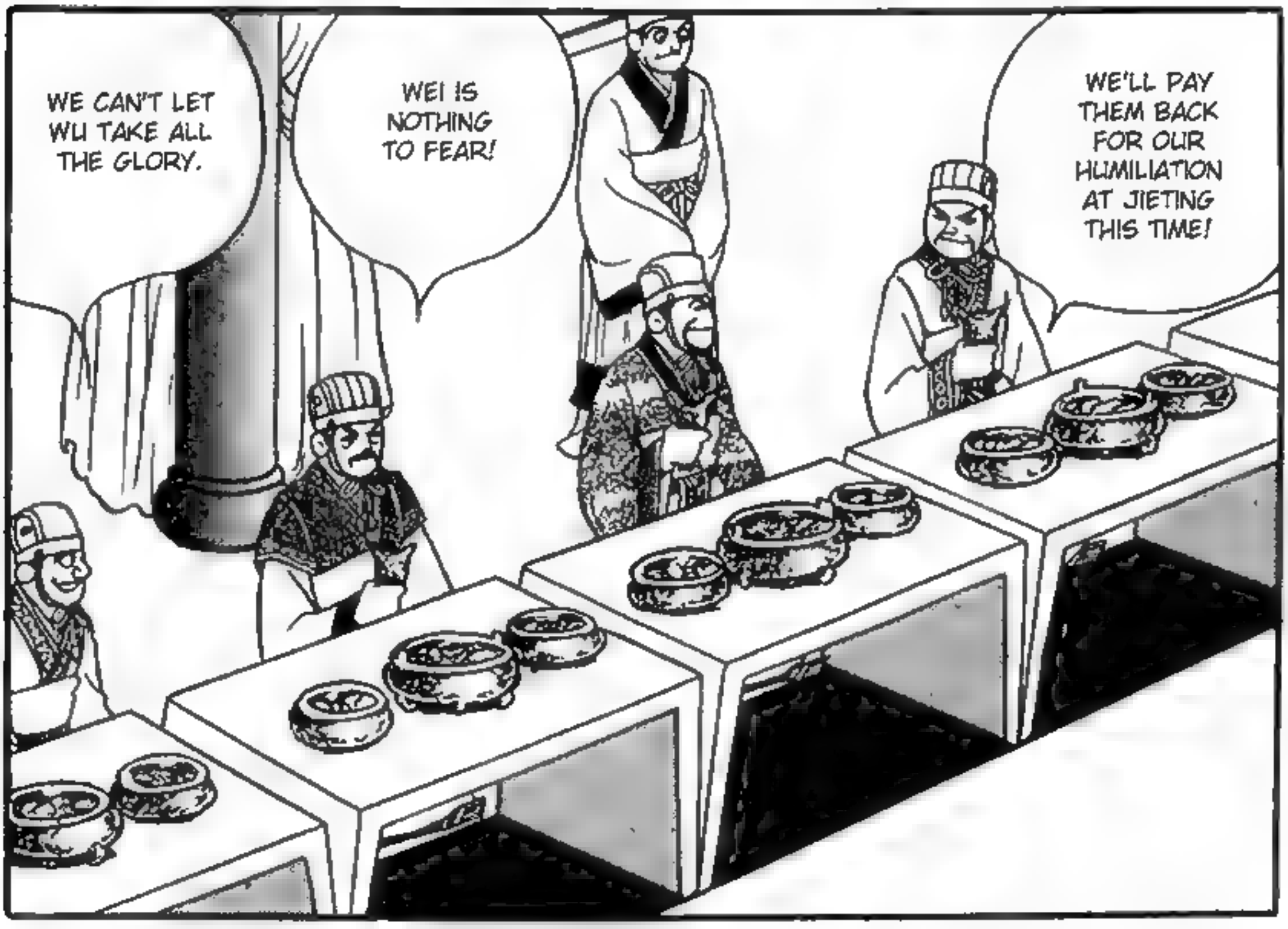
NANZHENG, HANZHONG
南郭
GENTLEMEN, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TONIGHT TO CELEBRATE THE GOOD NEWS SENT FROM THE CAPITAL BY OUR EMPEROR. AS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ALREADY, WU ARMIES HAVE DELIVERED A STINGING BLOW TO THE INVADING WEI FORCES. LET US ALL REJOICE TOGETHER AT THIS NEWS!

THE WEI COURT MUST BE IN A PANIC.

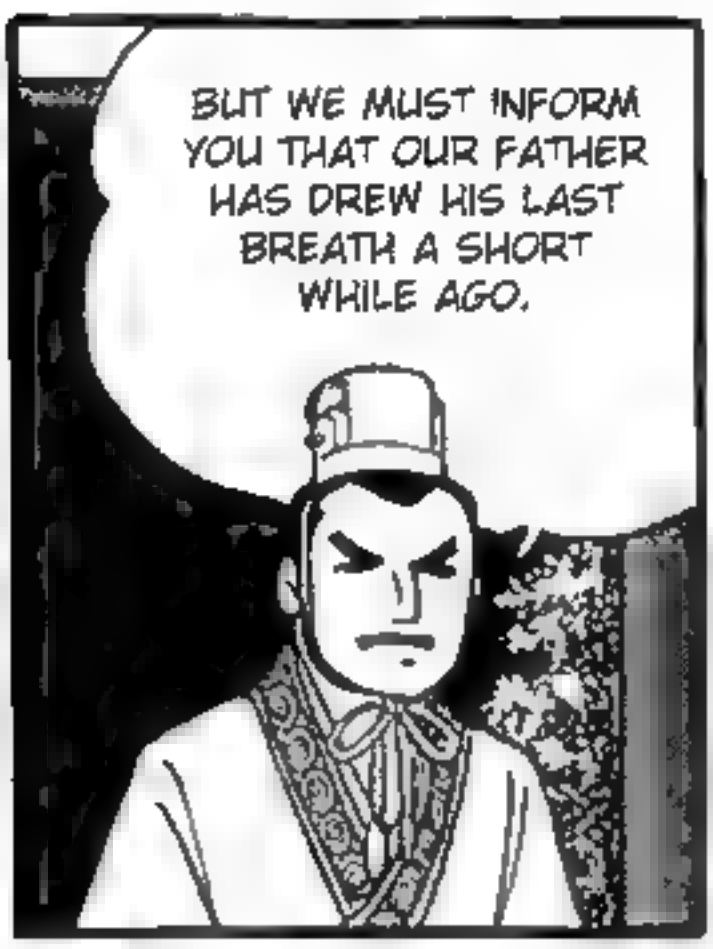
A GRAND VICTORY, EH?

TO CHANG'AN AT LAST!
YES, WE ARE MORE THAN PREPARED FOR ANOTHER CAMPAIGN!

THE TIME TO ATTACK CHANG'AN HAS COME AGAIN!


WE CAN'T LET WU TAKE ALL THE GLORY.
WEI IS NOTHING TO FEAR!
WE'LL PAY THEM BACK FOR OUR HUMILIATION AT JIETING THIS TIME!

EXCUSE ME, SIR, BUT GENERAL ZHAO ZILONG'S SONS ZHAO TONG AND ZHAO GUANG ARE HERE TO SEE YOU.


BUT WE MUST INFORM YOU THAT OUR FATHER HAS DREW HIS LAST BREATH A SHORT WHILE AGO.

FORGIVE US FOR DISTURBING THE FESTIVE MOOD,
WHAT BRINGS YOU TWO HERE?

ZHAO ZILONG WAS A PILLAR TO OUR EMPIRE, AND A RIGHT ARM TO MYSELF...

NO, SIR...
SO THE DOCTORS AND TREAT-MENTS HAD NO EFFECT...?

THE HERO WHO ONCE CHARGED ALONE INTO CAO CAO'S MILLION MAN ARMY TO SAVE LIU BEI'S SON
THE MIGHTY GENERAL WHO INSPIRED COURAGE TO HIS TROOPS AND FEAR TO HIS FOES THE WARRIOR WHO LED SHU TO COUNTLESS VICTORIES WAS NOW NO MORE

ALTHOUGH KONGMING KNEW ALL MEN HAD THEIR TIME TO PART, HE COULD NOT RESTRAIN HIS HEART FROM BEING OVERWHELMED WITH EMOTIONS AS HE GAZED ABOVE AT THE NIGHT SKY, STREAMS OF HOT TEARS FLOWED DOWN HIS EYES

LATTER CHU SHI BIAO
(PETITION FOR WAR)

YES, I WAS SENT HERE ON HIS BEHALF AS HE IS BUSY PERSONALLY OVERSEEING THE DRILLING OF TROOPS NIGHT AND DAY.

GREETINGS YANG YI. DID KONGMING SEND YOU?

LET ME SEE.

HE ASKED ME TO DELIVER THIS TO YOUR MAJESTY.

THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT WOULD NOT RECOMMEND WAR IF HE FELT THE TROOPS AT HANZHONG WERE NOT READY, YOUR MAJESTY.

HM? A PETITION FOR WAR? DOES HE WISH TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEI SO SOON AGAIN?

HM...

WEI AND SHU ARE LOCKED IN A STRUGGLE FOR THE CONTROL OF THE REALM AND ONE WILL EVENTUALLY FALL TO THE OTHER. SIMPLY WAITING PASSIVELY IN SPITE OF WEI'S SUPERIORITY IN MANPOWER AND WEALTH IS TO AWAIT OUR OWN END. THUS, WE HAVE NO OPTION BUT TO DEFY THIS FATE BY MARCHING TO ARMS.

BUT WEI'S INTERNAL SITUATION IS WORSE THAN OURS CURRENTLY WITH THEIR RECENT DEFEAT BY WU HANDS.

I AM WELL AWARE,

YANG YI, ARE YOU NOT AWARE THE GREAT TOLL THESE COSTLY WARS ARE TAKING ON THE PEASANTS AND SOLDIERS?

YES, I AGREE.

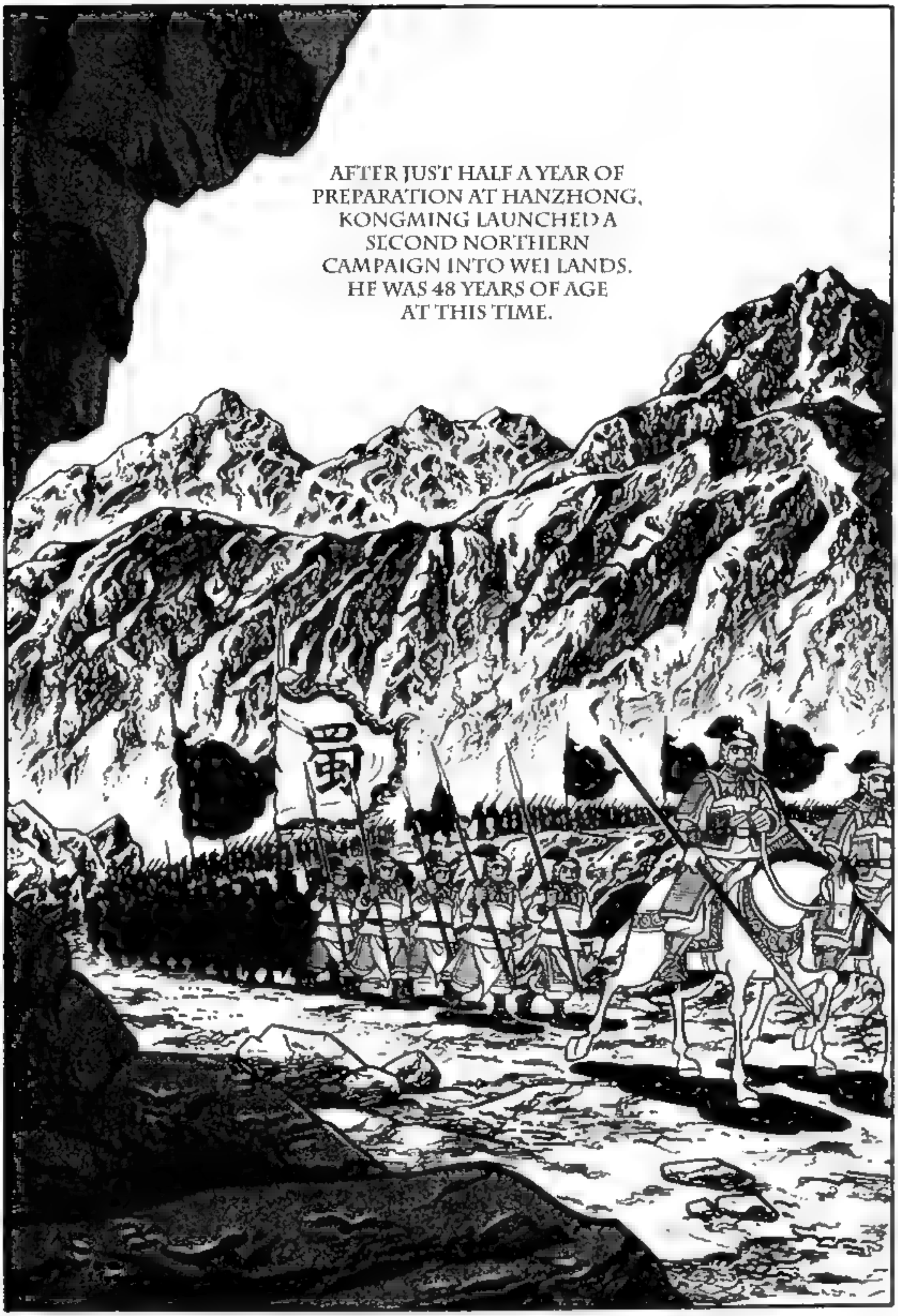
CONQUERING WEI IS NO EASY TASK, OF COURSE, BUT IF WE LET THIS CHANCE SLIP, WHO KNOWS WHEN, IF EVER, WE WILL FIND ANOTHER VULNERABLE OPENING TO EXPLOIT?

EXACTLY, YOUR MAJESTY.

MY LATE FATHER'S GOAL IN LIFE WAS TO CONQUER WEI AND RESTORE THE HAN. HOW CAN I REFUSE KONGMING'S DESIRE TO FULFIL THAT WISH?

I WILL DELIVER THE MESSAGE AT ONCE.

I OFFICIALLY GRANT GENERAL OF THE RIGHT THE PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT THIS CAMPAIGN.

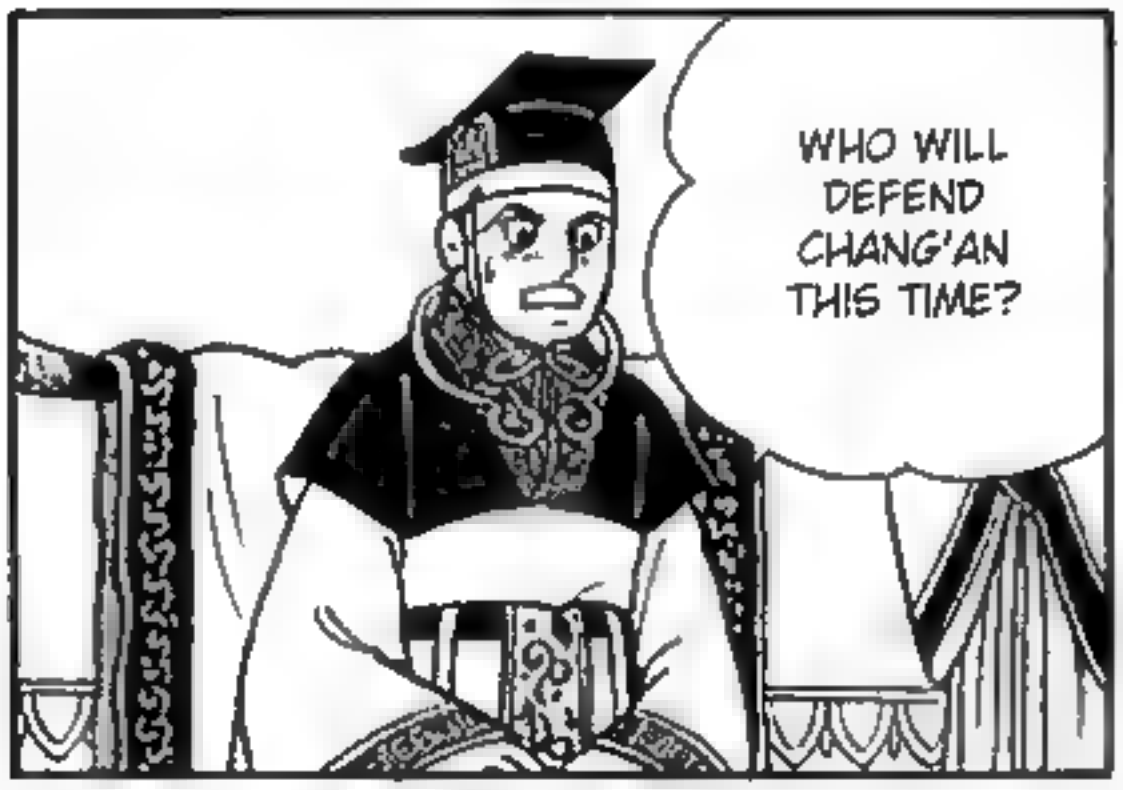

AFTER JUST HALF A YEAR OF
PREPARATION AT HANZHONG,
KONGMING LAUNCHED A
SECOND NORTHERN
CAMPAIGN INTO WEI LANDS.
HE WAS 48 YEARS OF AGE
AT THIS TIME.

TRUE TO SIMA YI'S PREDICTION, THE SHU FORCE MARCHED FIRST FOR CHENCANG

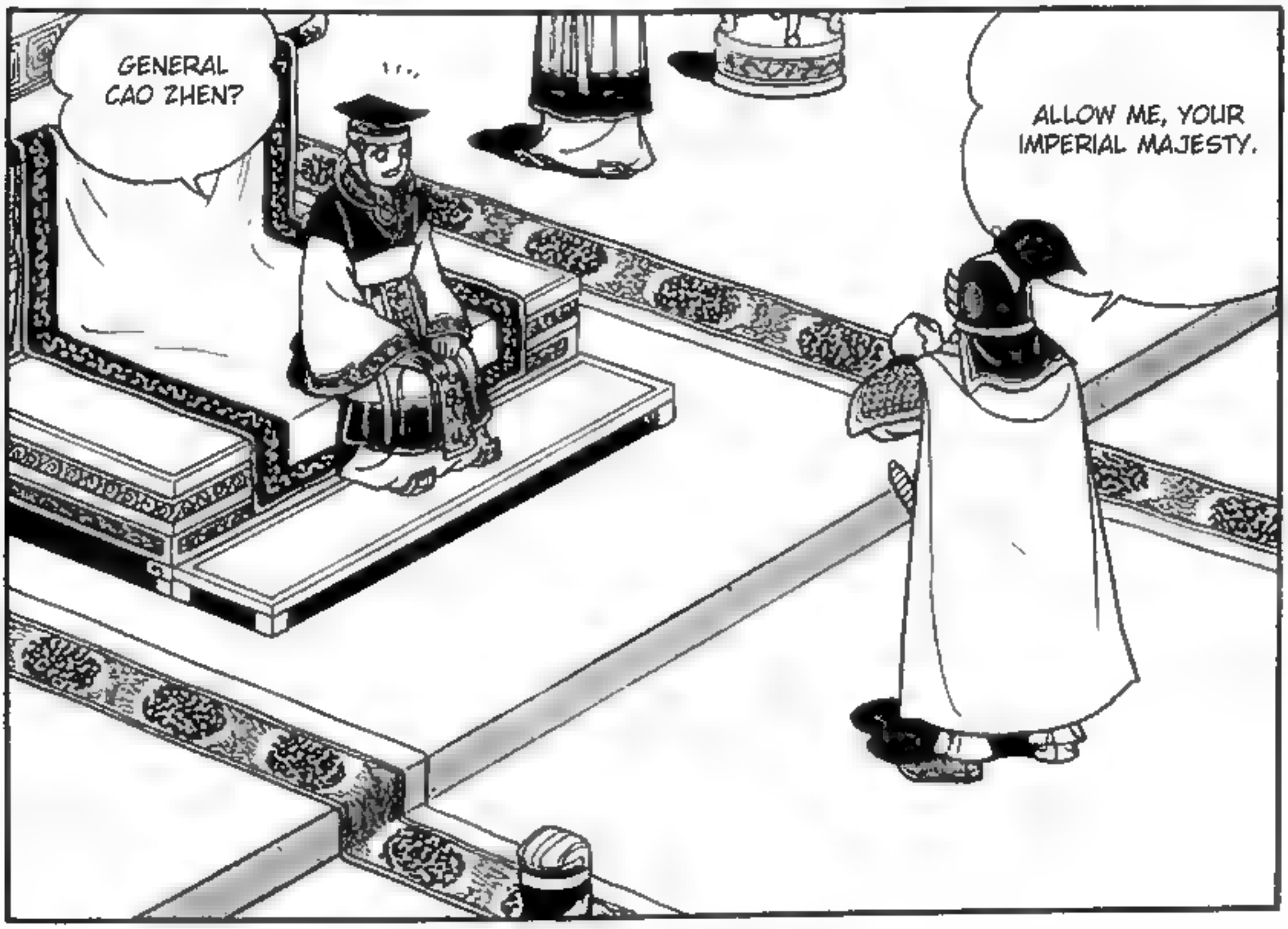
THE YEAR HAD ALREADY ENTERED WINTER AND THE MOUNTAINS WERE COVERED WITH SNOW

LUOYANG
洛陽

YES, THEIR FORCES NUMBER AT 300,000.
SHU ARMIES ARE AIMING FOR CHANG'AN AGAIN!?


WHO WILL DEFEND CHANG'AN THIS TIME?

JUST WHEN OUR SOUTHERN FRONTIER IS IN DANGER OF BE NG COMPROMISED TOO...


GENERAL CAO ZHEN?
...
ALLOW ME, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

TO HELP ME IN THIS TASK, I HAVE RECENTLY FOUND A MIGHTY WARRIOR. HE WIELDS A GREAT SWORD WEIGHING 60 CATTIES IN ADDITION TO A DOUBLE-HEADED METEOR HAMMER WHICH HE THROWS WITH DEADLY ACCURACY.
IN THE PREVIOUS WAR, I FAILED TO DEFEND LONGXI AND I ALSO COULD NOT ACHIEVE ANY MERITS OF NOTE DURING MY CONFRONTATION WITH ZHUGE LIANG AT QISHAN HILLS. I CANNOT LIVE WITH THIS DISGRACE AND THUS SEEK ANOTHER CHANCE TO REDEEM MYSELF TO YOUR MAJESTY.

OH? YOU'VE PIQUED MY INTERESTS.

I WISH TO HAVE A REMATCH WITH ZHUGE LIANG WITH THIS MAN SERVING AS MY VANGUARD LEADER.

YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

TALENTED MEN ARE NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER. BRING THIS MAN BEFORE ME. I WOULD LIKE TO MEET HIM MYSELF.

YES, I AM WANG SHUANG, COURTESY NAME ZIQAN, AND I HAIL FROM DIDAO OF LONGXI.

YOU MUST BE THE GREAT WARRIOR CAO ZHEN BOASTED ABOUT.

YES, I HAVE NEVER FOUGHT A BATTLE THAT I LOST, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

AND ARE CAO ZHEN'S REMARKS ABOUT YOUR COMBAT SKILLS TRUE?

VERY WELL, YOU WILL BE APPOINTED AS THE VANGUARD LEADER.

YES, YOU CERTAINLY LOOK DEPENDABLE.

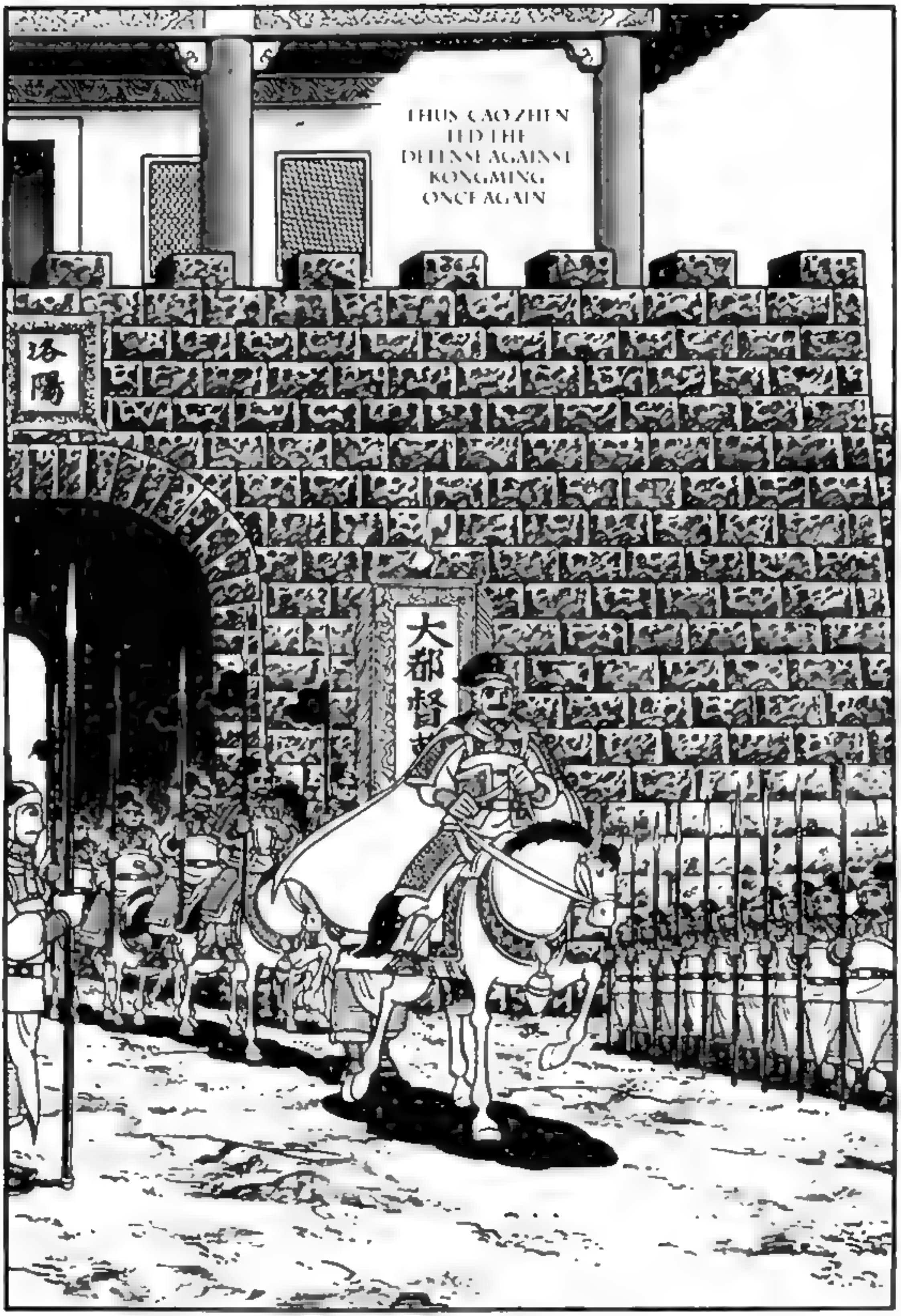
YES?

CAO ZHEN.

THANK YOU.

THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.

I APPOINT YOU THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AS REQUESTED. DO YOUR BEST TO DEFEAT ZHUGE LIANG AND REDEEM YOURSELF.


THUS CAOZHEN
LED THE
DEFENSE AGAINST
KONGMING
ONCE AGAIN
洛陽
大都督

©HENCANG

YOU'VE ACCURATELY PREDICTED THE ROUTE I WOULD TAKE FOR MY SECOND CAMPAIGN.

WELL DONE, SIMA YI...

THERE APPEARS TO BE A WEI FORT ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.

NO, IF WE CANNOT EVEN CAPTURE A SINGLE FORT HERE, THEN OUR ARMIES WILL SEE NO SUCCESS AT QISHAN EITHER.

SIR, CONSIDERING THE SNOWFALL AND NEW FORT HERE, PERHAPS WE SHOULD INSTEAD TAKE THE ROUTE THROUGH TAIBO MOUNTAIN RANGE TO QISHAN HILLS.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, JUST NORTH FROM CHENCANG IS THE ALL-IMPORTANT JIETING. WE MUST TAKE CHENCANG!

JIN XIANG?

AN OFFICER NAMED JIN XIANG SAYS HE HAS SOMETHING URGENT TO TELL YOU, SIR.

ENTER!

VERY WELL.

THE GENERAL IN CHARGE OF CHENCANG'S DEFENSE IS HAO ZHAO, WHO HAPPENS TO BE AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE. WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WILL GO EXPLAIN HIS DIRE SITUATION AND PERSUADE HIM TO SURRENDER.

WHAT DO YOU WISH TO SAY?

THE BEST KIND OF VICTORY IS ONE WITHOUT BLOODSHED.

YES.

OH, CLOSE FRIENDS, ARE YOU TWO?

THANK YOU, SIR.

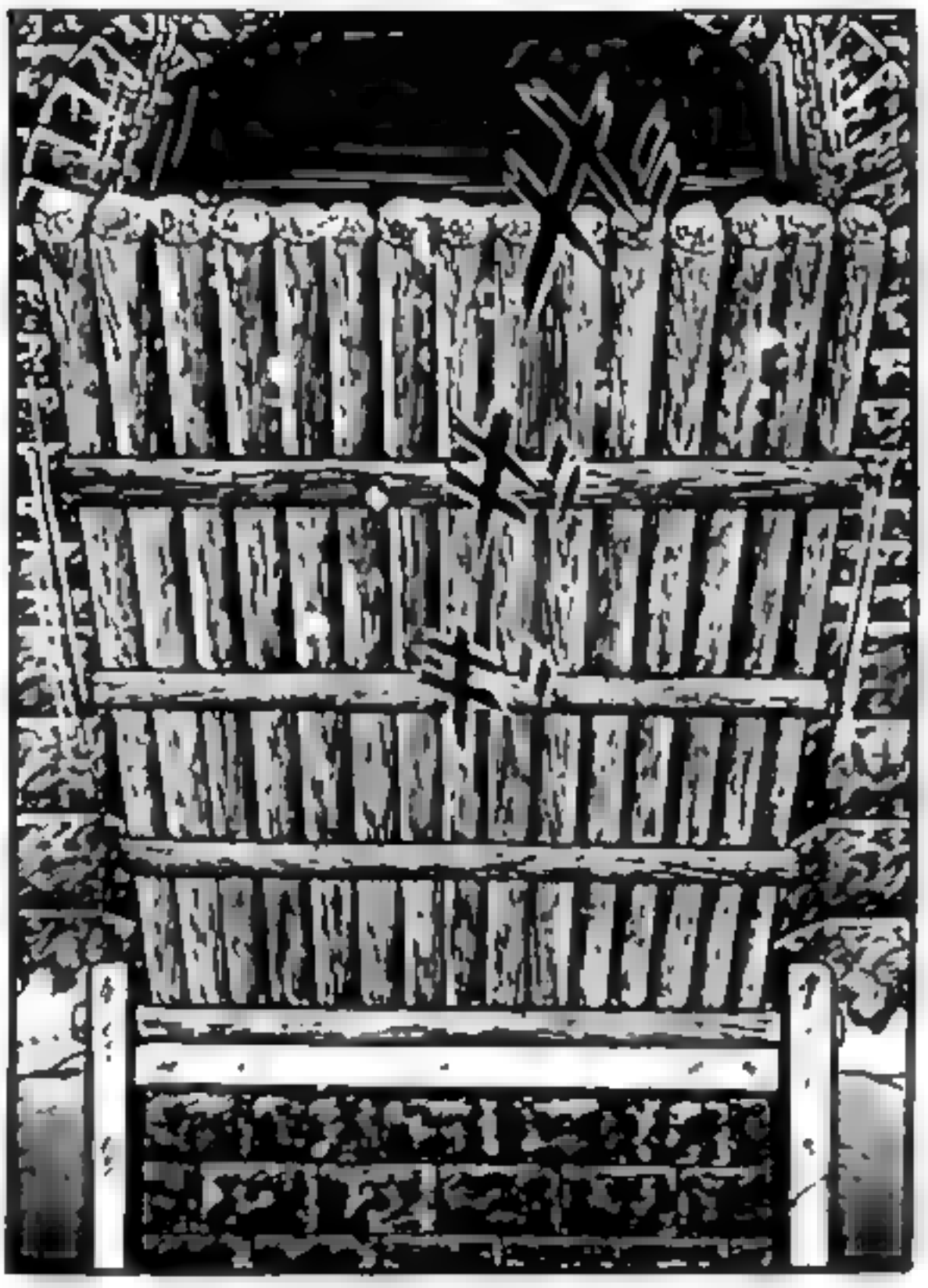
YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO GO PERSUADE HIM.

JIN XIANG!?

A MAN NAMED JIN XIANG STANDS OUTSIDE THE GATES, WISHING TO MEET YOU, SIR.

YES, SIR.
LET HIM IN AT ONCE!

AH, IT REALLY IS YOU, JIN XIANG!



IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU ARE STILL WELL.
IT'S BEEN TOO LONG, MY FRIEND.

THERE IS A MAN I WANT TO INTRODUCE TO YOU.
SO WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

ZHUGE LIANG KONG-MING.

AND WHO IS THAT?

I AM A SERVANT OF WEI, AND YOU ARE A SERVANT OF SHU. I AM WILLING TO MEET WITH A FRIEND OF LONGXI, BUT NOT A SHU SERVANT WHO BRINGS UP HIS MASTER.

WHY SO QUICK TO ANGER, HAO ZHAO?
GET OUT THIS INSTANT!

SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

PLEASE HEAR ME OUT, HAO ZHAO. SURELY, A SMALL FORT LIKE THIS ONLY HAS A FEW THOUSAND TROOPS AT MOST. A SHU FORCE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND ARE HERE TO LAY SIEGE TO CHENCANG. JUST HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HOLD OUT?

HOW CAN I SIMPLY LEAVE MY GOOD FRIEND HERE TO DIE? I'VE COME HERE, THINKING ONLY OF WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.

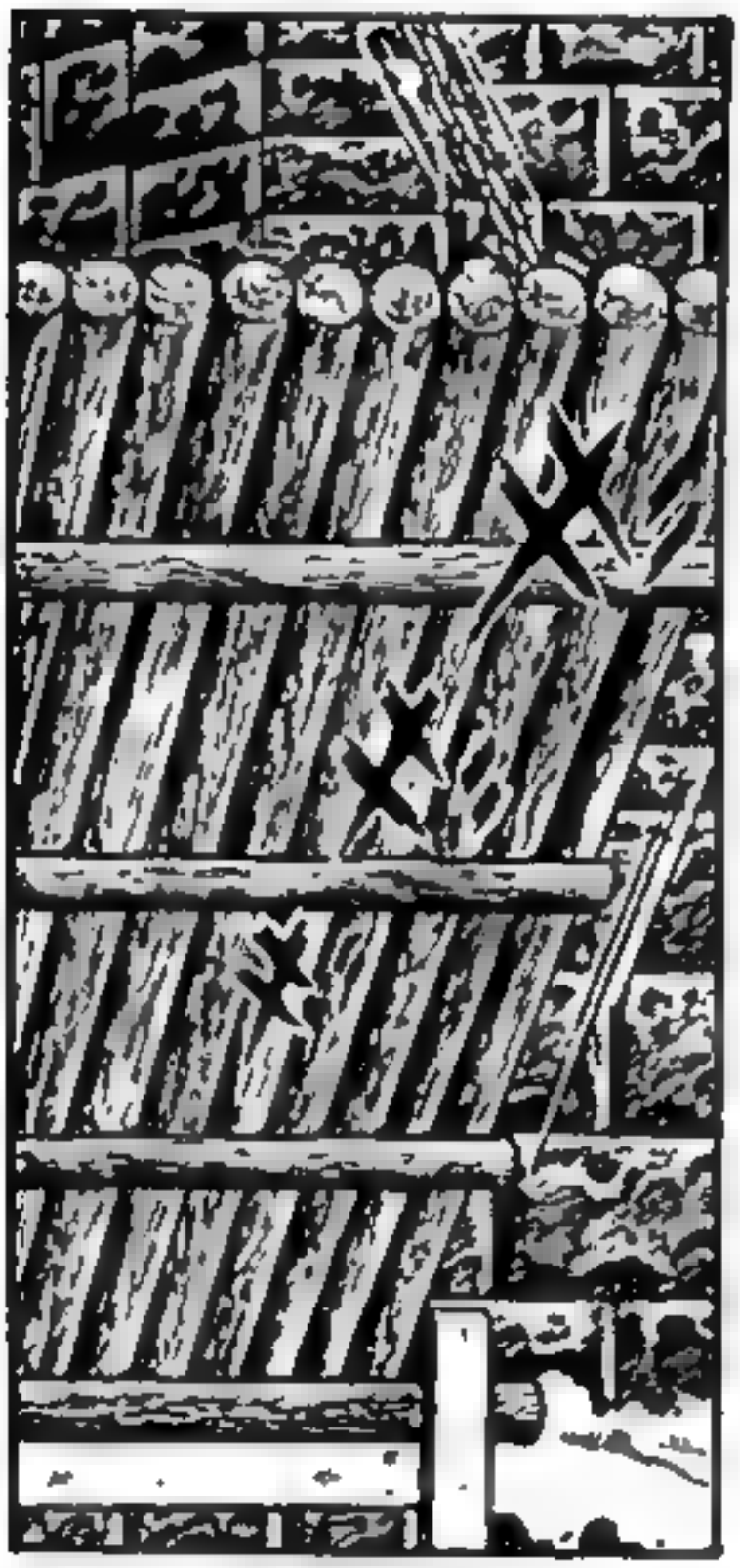
I CARE NOT HOW MANY LEGIONS ZHUGE LIANG BRINGS! I WILL DO MY DUTY BY DEFENDING THIS FORT WITH MY LIFE! NOW LEAVE AND TELL THAT TO YOUR MASTER!

COME!

DRAG THIS MAN OUT!

I HAVE NO EARS FOR AN ENEMY!

HAO ZHAO! THINK CLEARLY!



AND DON'T COME BACK!

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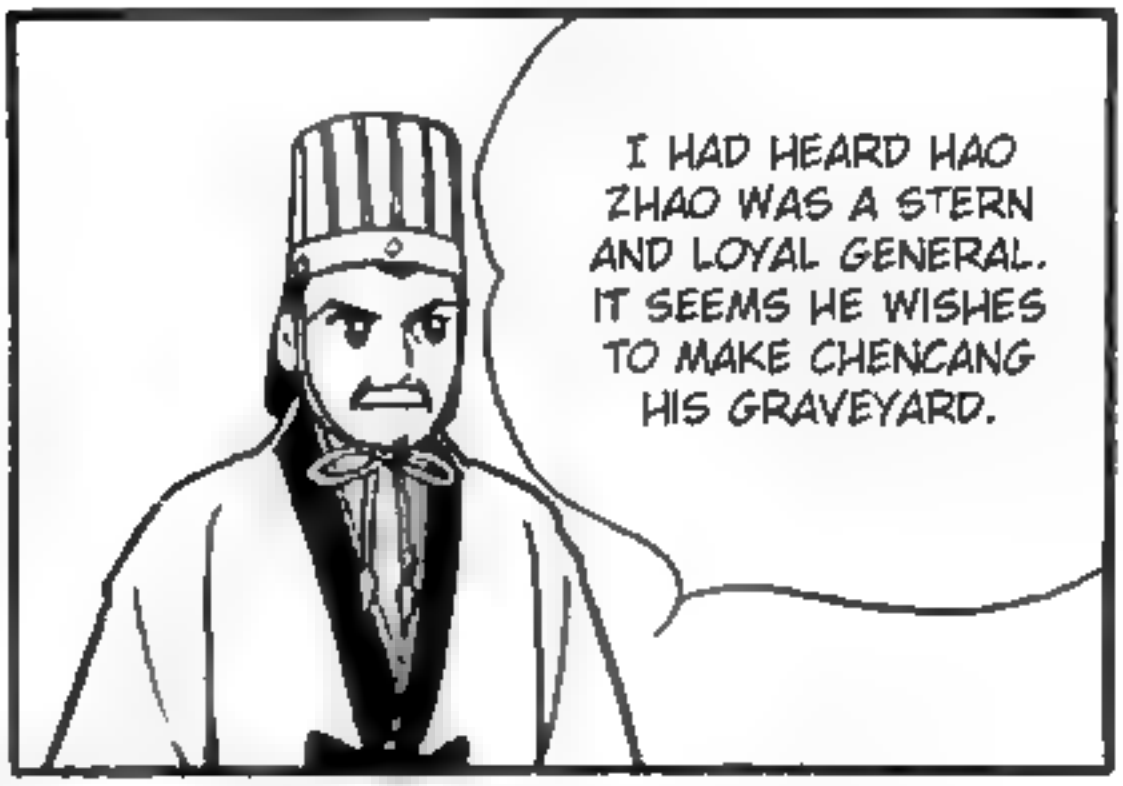
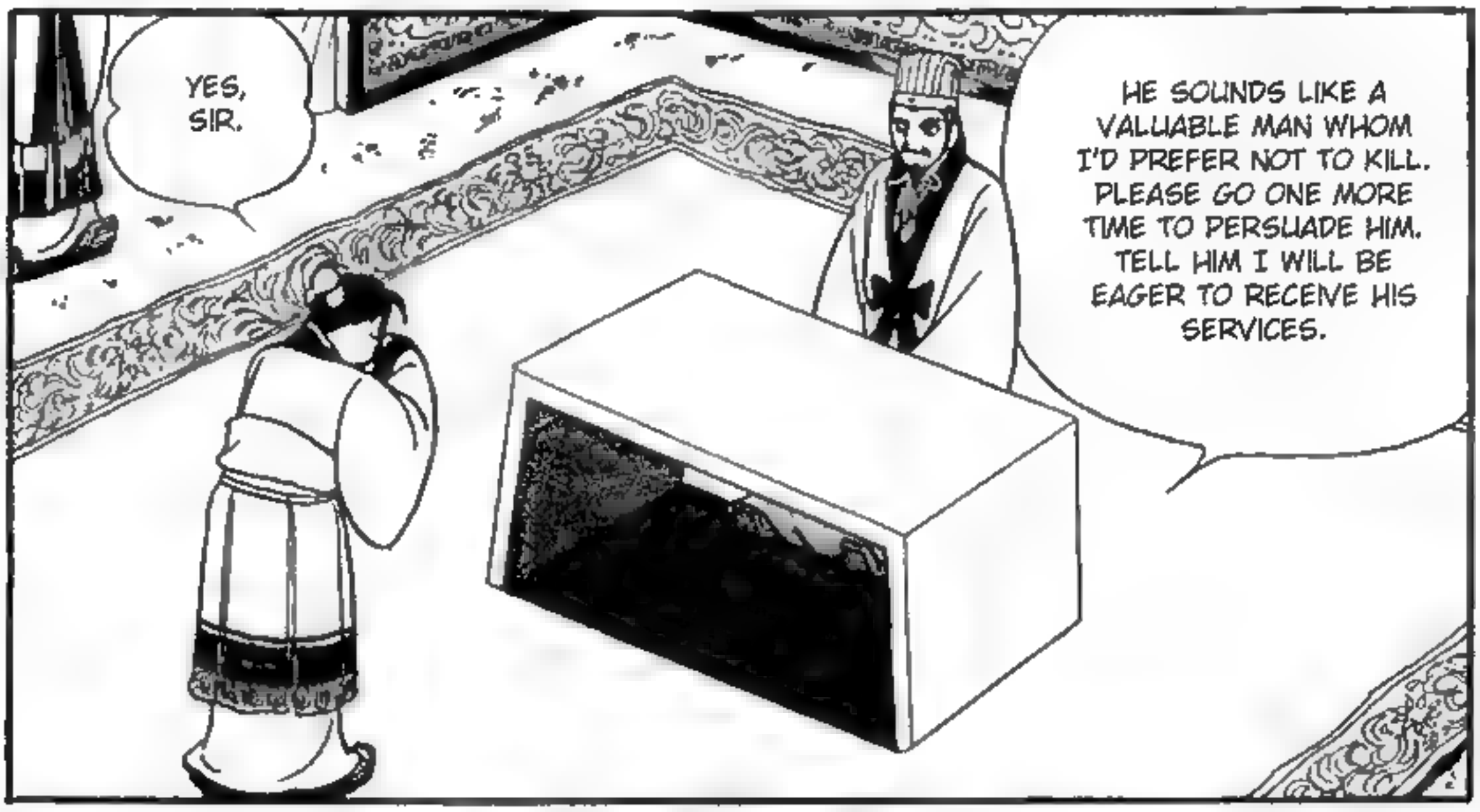
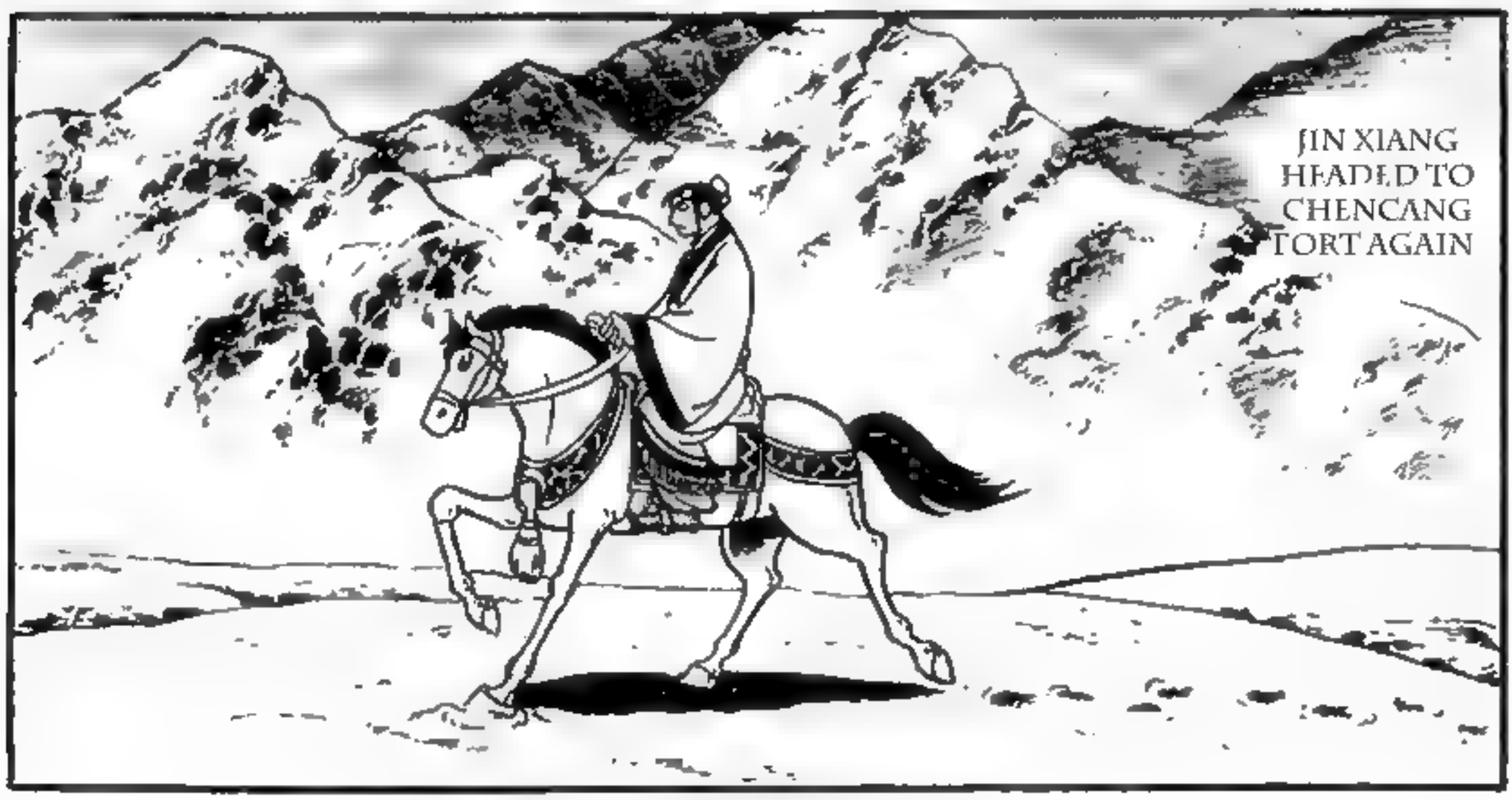
YES, HE REFUSED TO HEAR ME OUT.

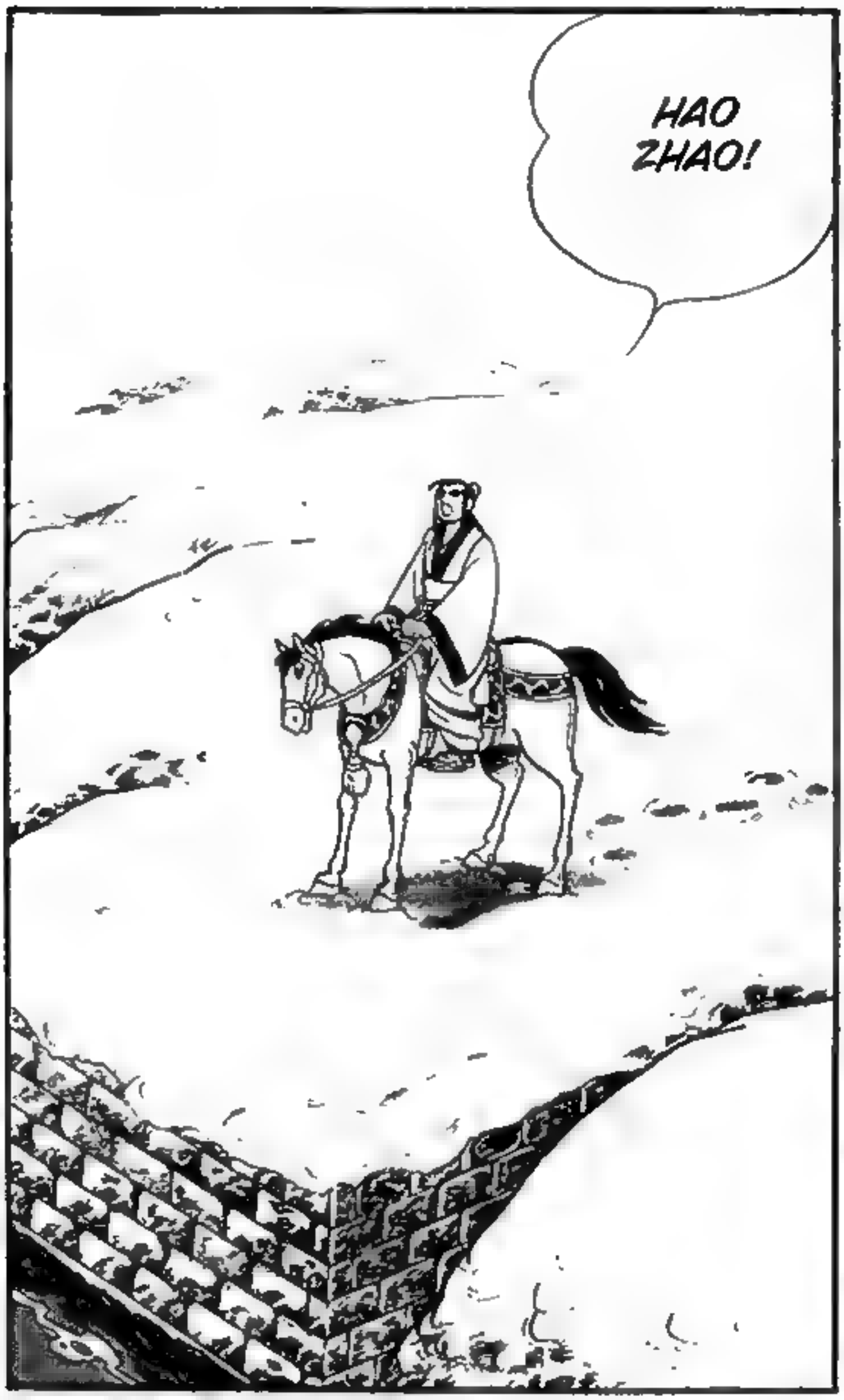
HE THREW YOU OUT?

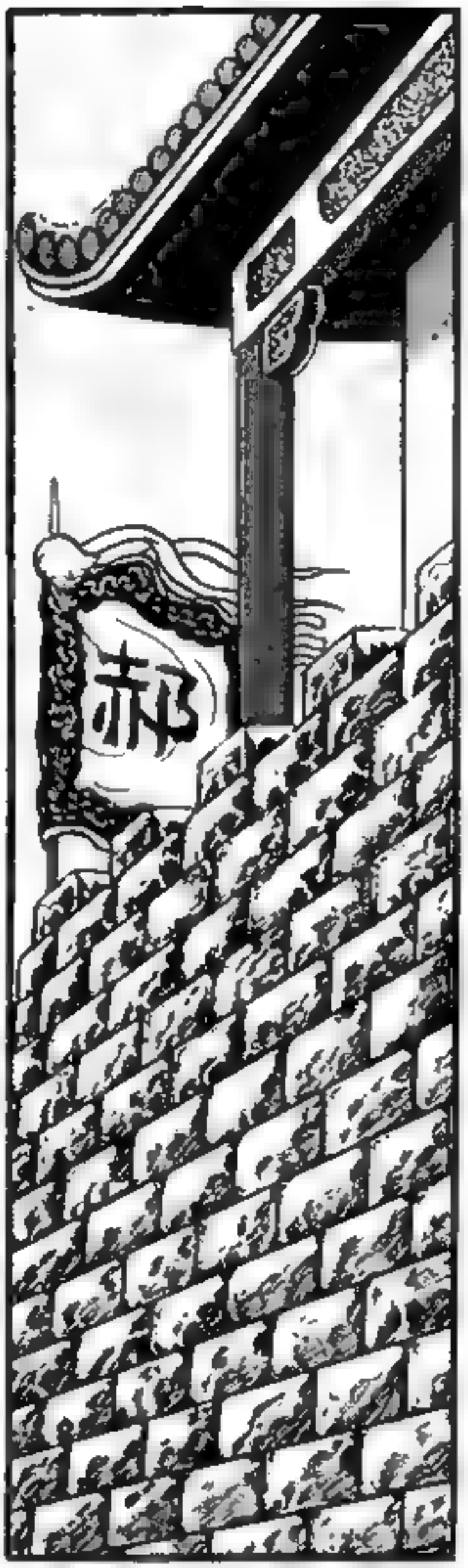
HE ALWAYS WAS RATHER STUBBORN...


I HAD HEARD HAO ZHAO WAS A STERN AND LOYAL GENERAL. IT SEEMS HE WISHES TO MAKE CHENCANG HIS GRAVEYARD.


YES, SIR.
HE SOUNDS LIKE A VALUABLE MAN WHOM I'D PREFER NOT TO KILL. PLEASE GO ONE MORE TIME TO PERSUADE HIM. TELL HIM I WILL BE EAGER TO RECEIVE HIS SERVICES.


JIN XIANG HEADED TO CHENCANG TORT AGAIN


HAO ZHAO!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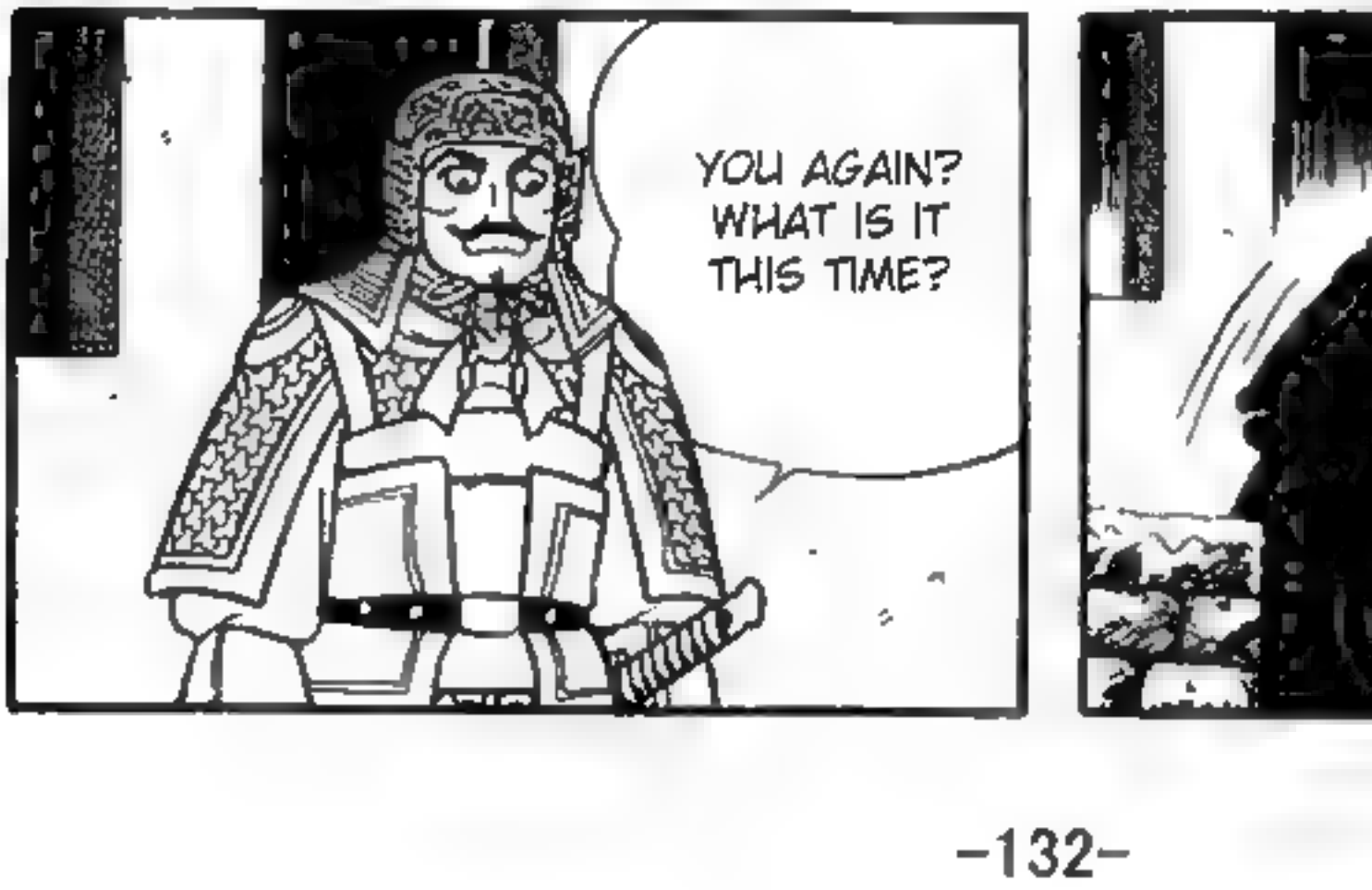
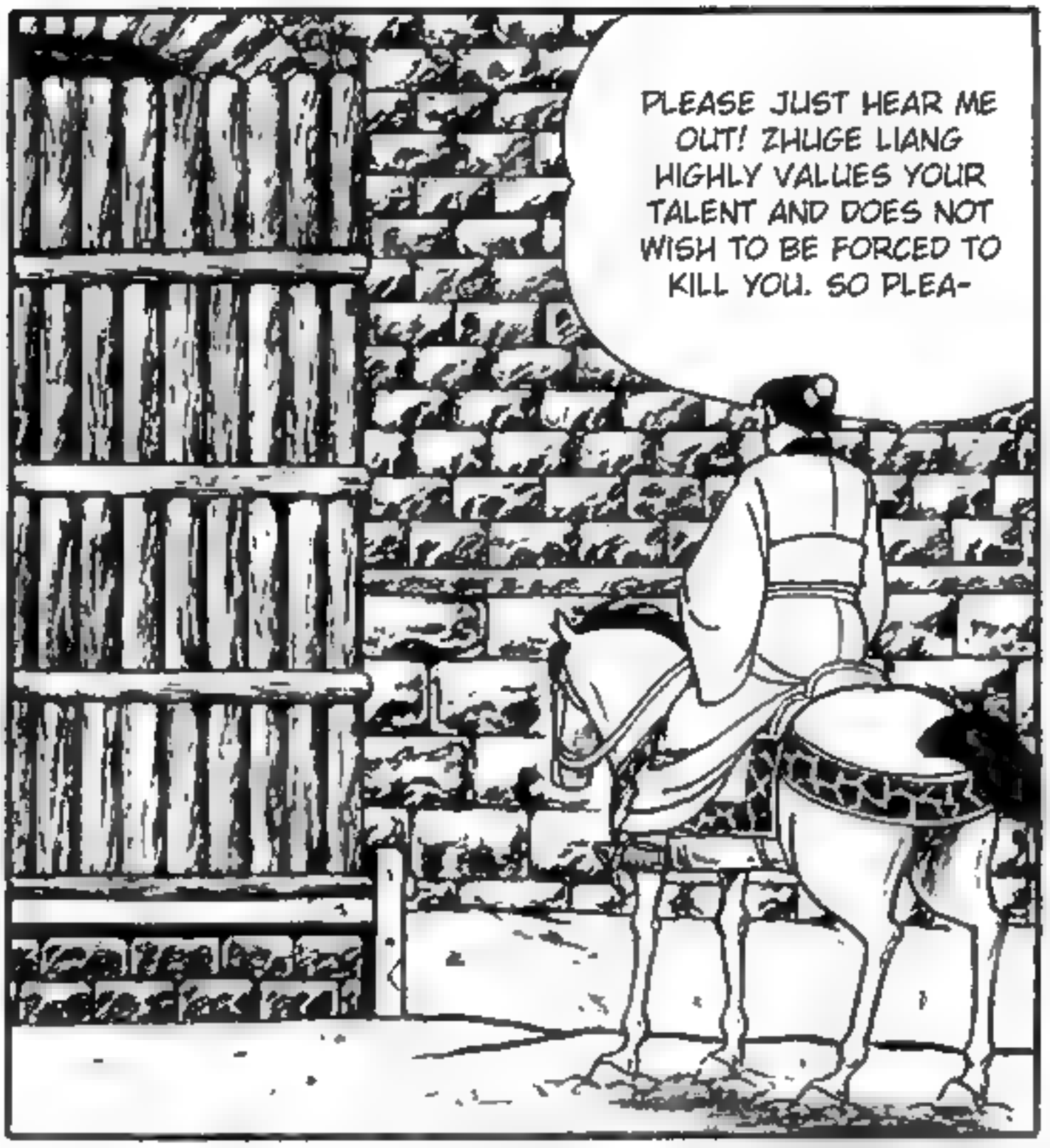
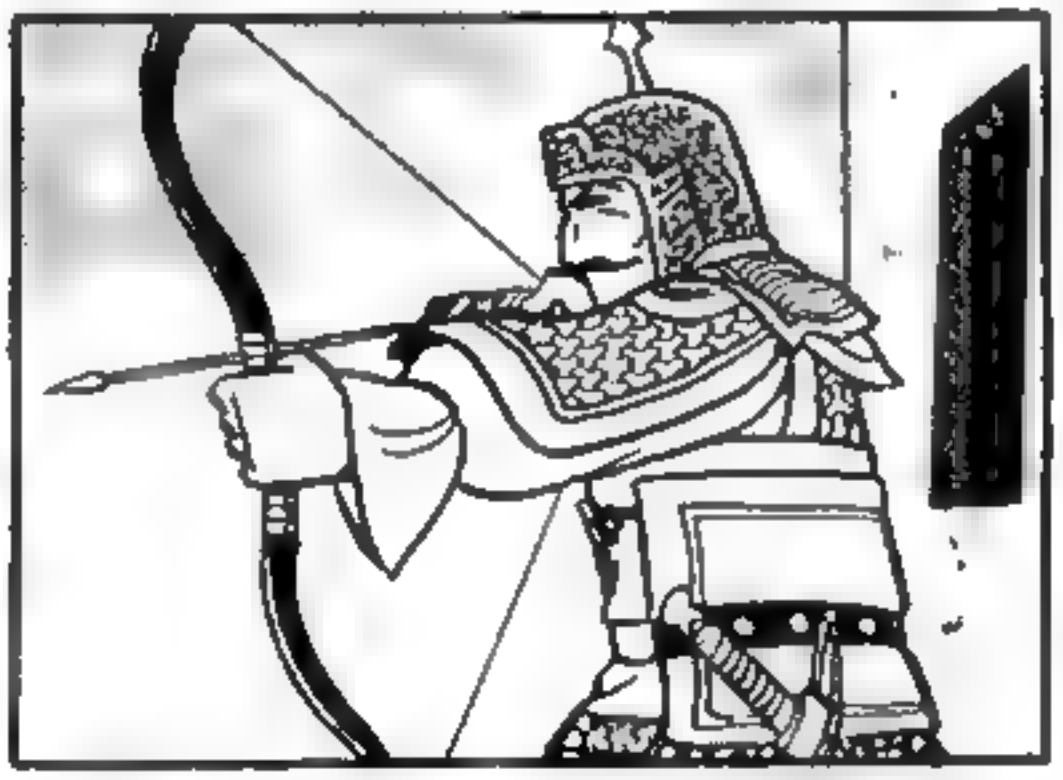

YOU AGAIN? WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?

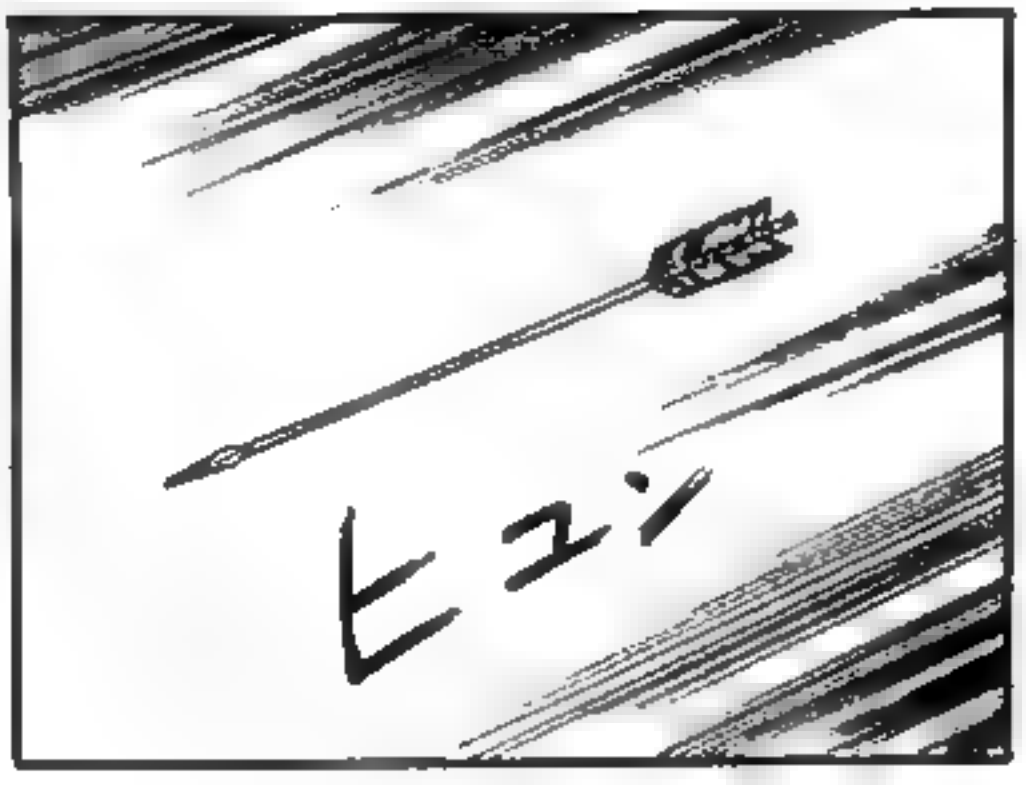
HAND ME MY BOW.


PLEASE JUST HEAR ME OUT! ZHUGE LIANG HIGHLY VALUES YOUR TALENT AND DOES NOT WISH TO BE FORCED TO KILL YOU. SO PLEA-

HERE, SIR.



AGHH!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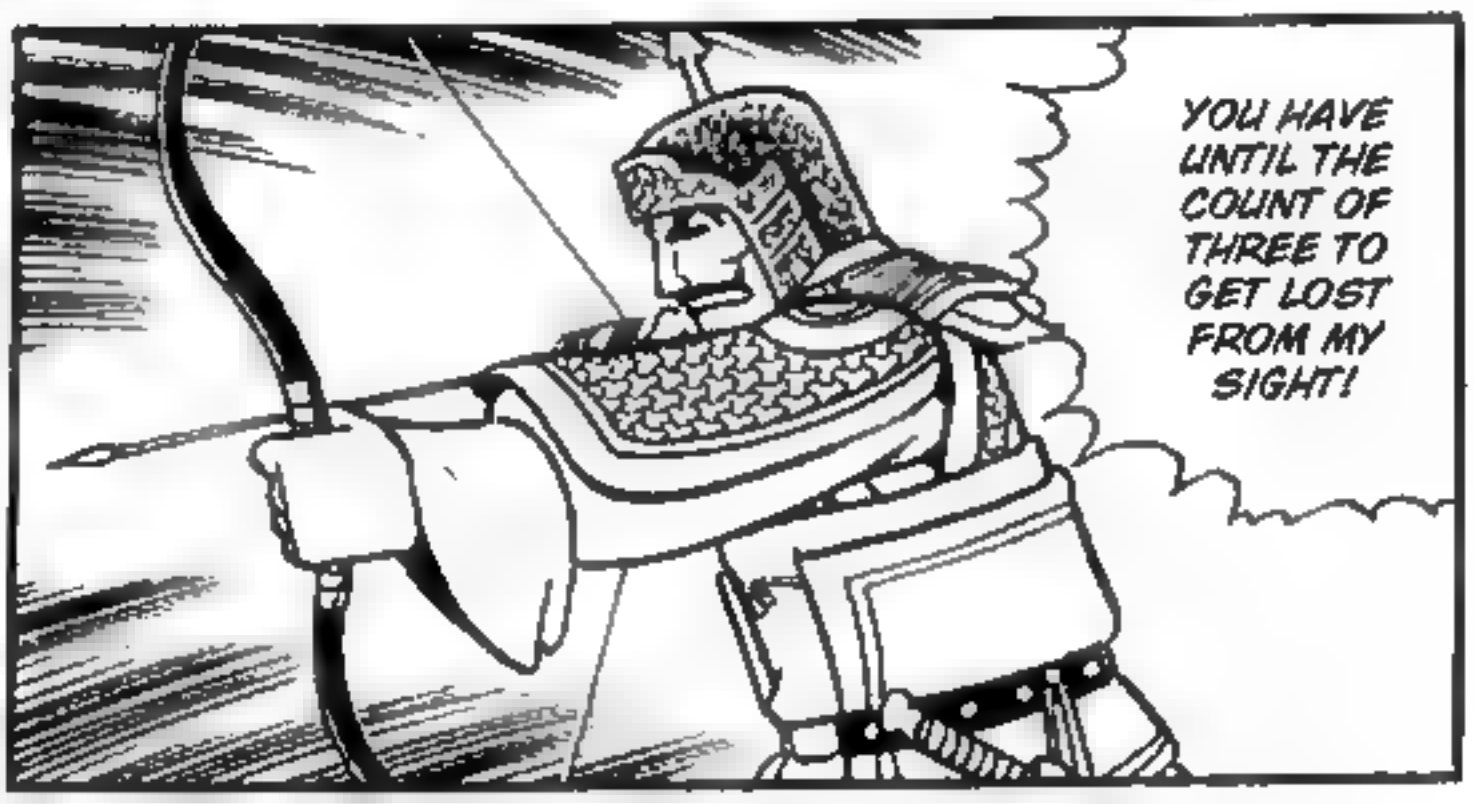
BUT WHY, HAO ZHAO!? THERE IS NO REASON WHY WE CANNOT SHARE A DRINK AND GO BACK TO BEING FRIENDS!

ON THE ACCOUNT OF OUR PAST FRIENDSHIP, I MISSED THAT SHOT ON PURPOSE JUST NOW. I CANNOT SAY THE SAME FOR MY NEXT SHOT IF YOU LINGER HERE ANY LONGER.

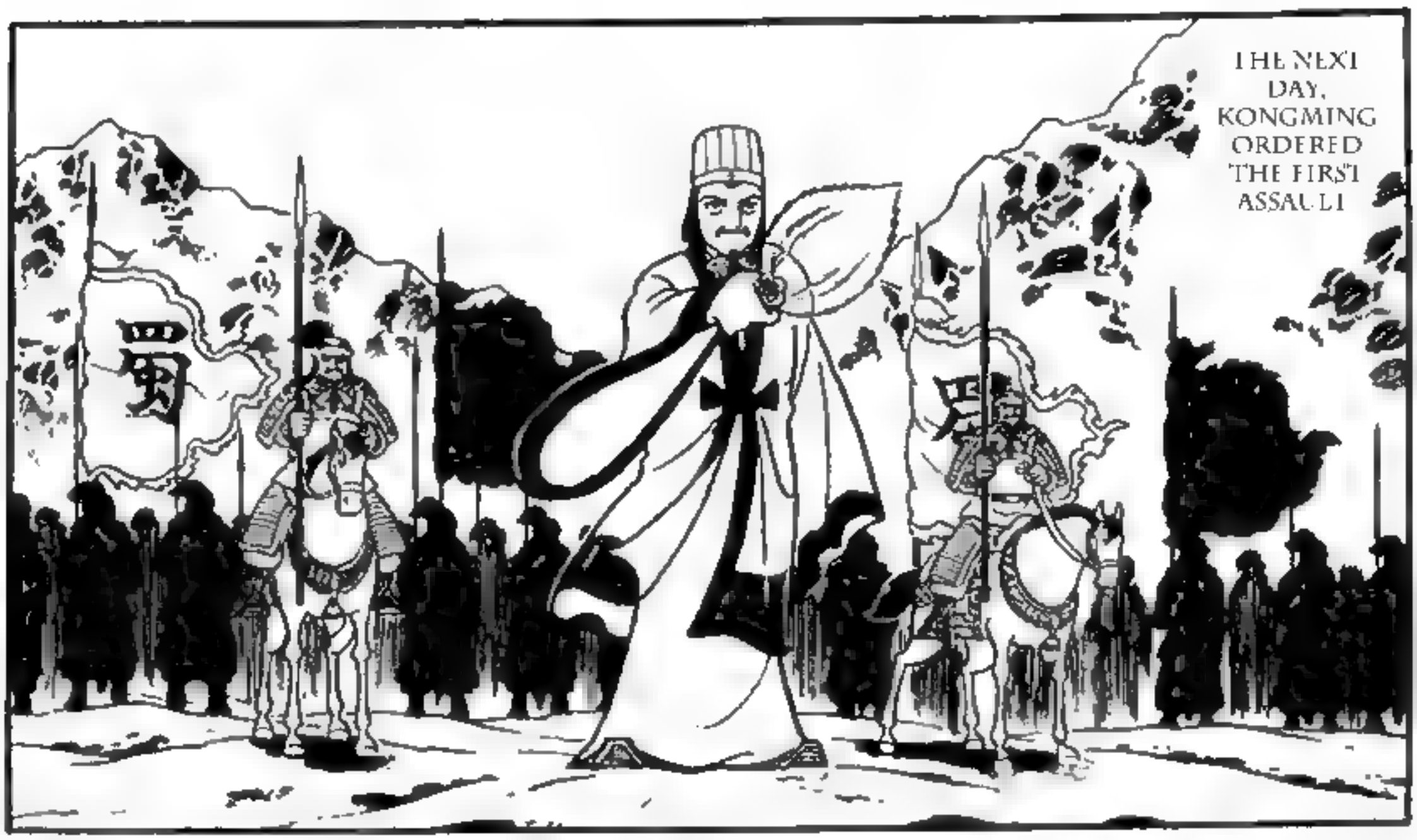

YOU HAVE UNTIL THE COUNT OF THREE TO GET LOST FROM MY SIGHT!

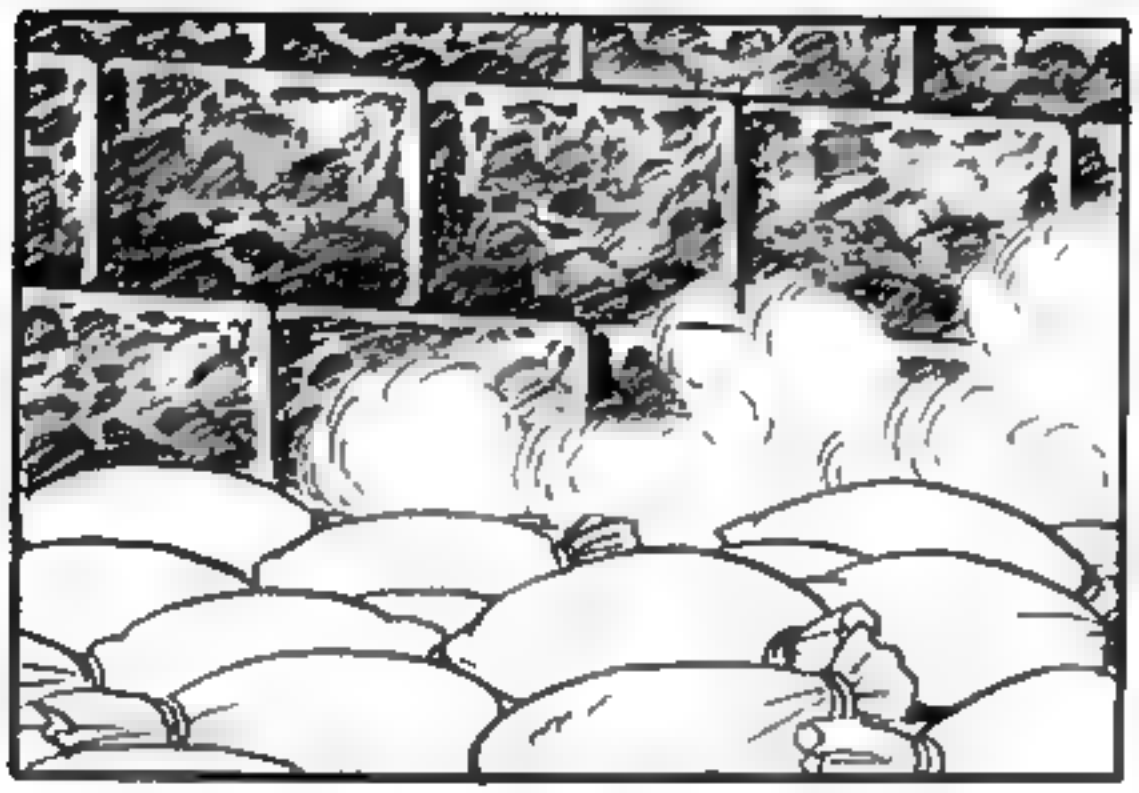
F... FINE! I'LL LEAVE, I'LL LEAVE!

ONE...! TWO...!

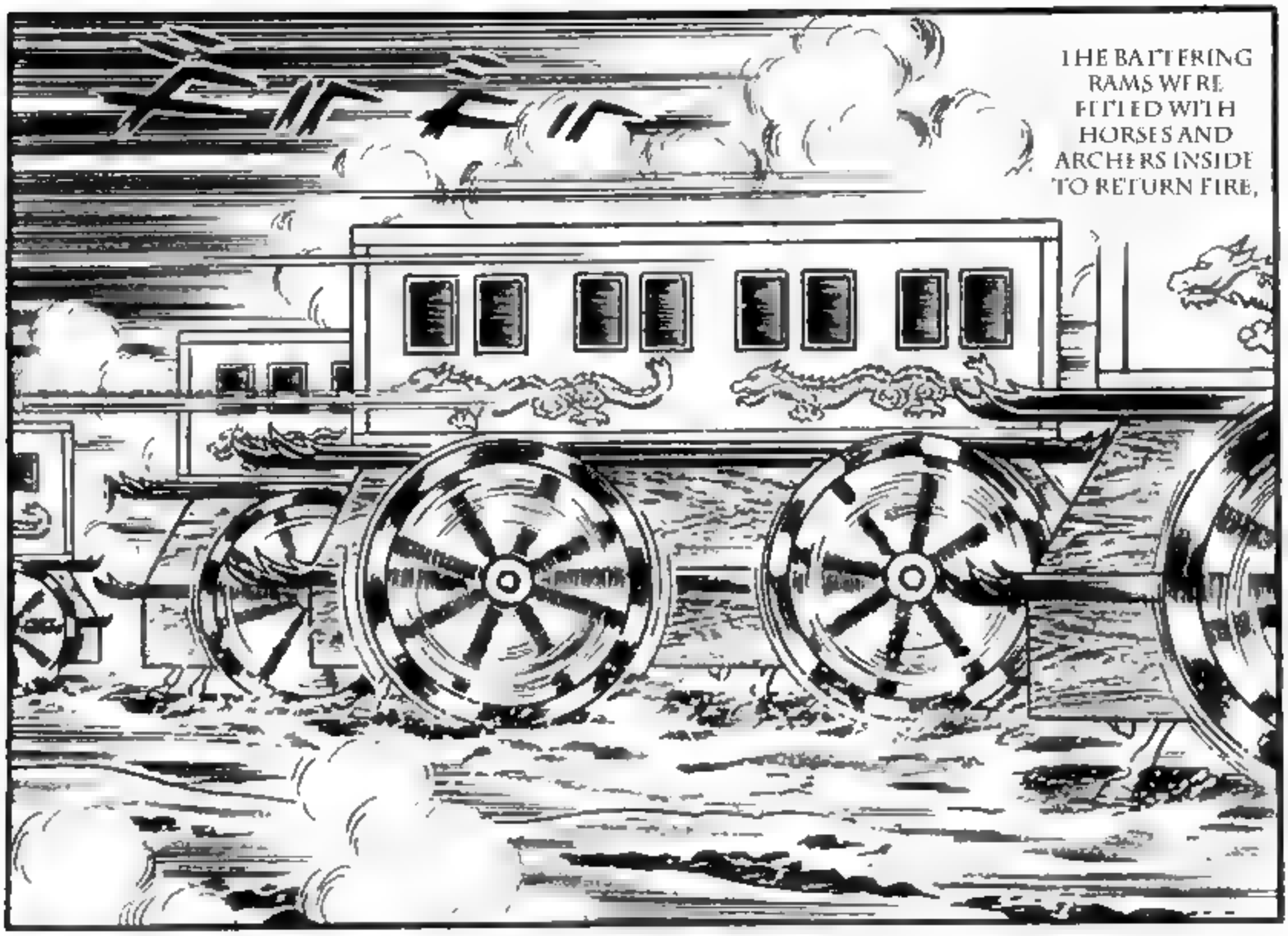
I APOLOGIZE I COULD NOT RENDER ANY HELPFUL SERVICE.
SO HE REFUSED YOU AGAIN, DID HE...
THEN A BLOODY SIEGE IS THE ONLY OPTION...

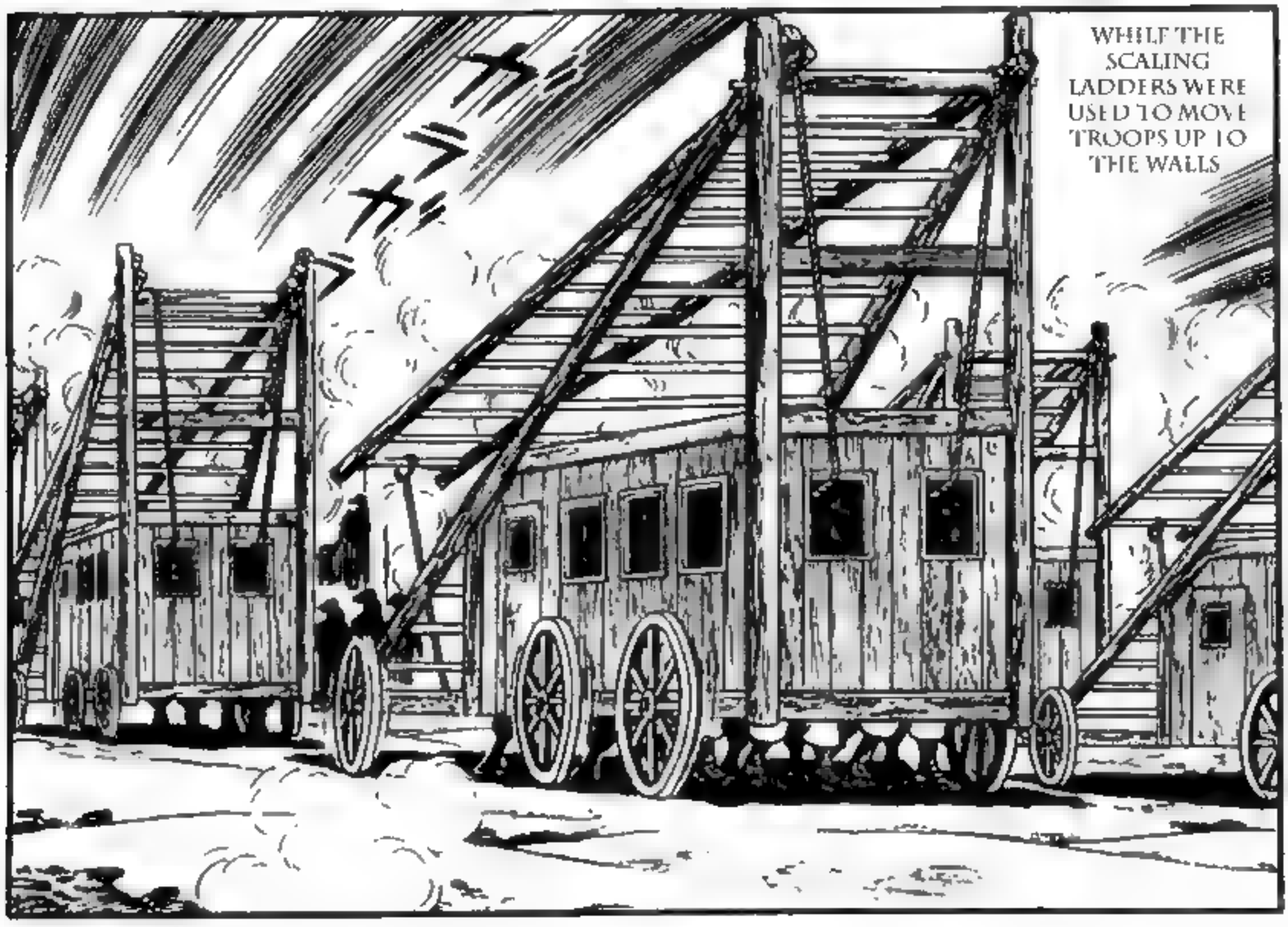
SIEGE OF CHENCANG





ONCE THE MOAT HAD BEEN FILLED, KONGMING SENT FORTH BATTERING RAMS AND SCALING LADDERS.


THE BATTERING RAMS WERE FITTED WITH HORSES AND ARCHERS INSIDE TO RETURN FIRE,

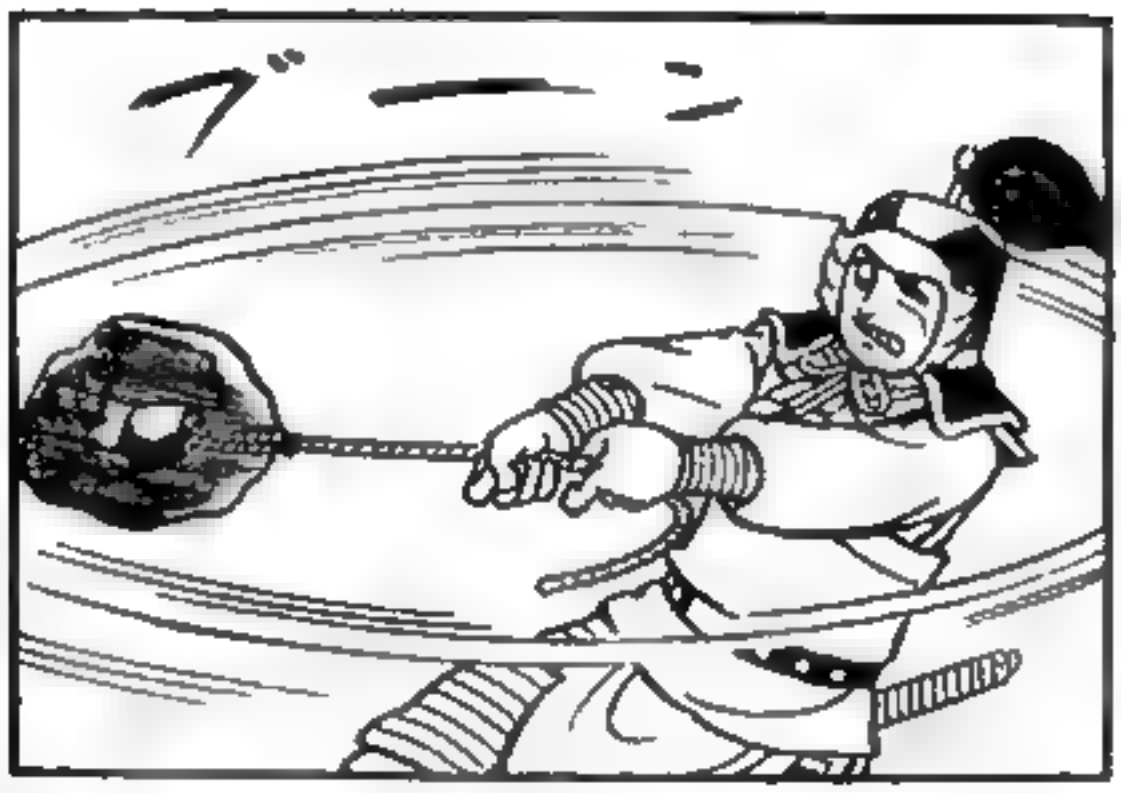

WHILE THE SCALING LADDERS WERE USED TO MOVE TROOPS UP TO THE WALLS

TELL THE TROOPS TO THROW DOWN ROCKS ON THE BATTERING RAMS WHILE SHOOTING FIRE ARROWS AT THE SCALING LADDERS!

STAY CALM, WE HAVE WAYS TO DEAL WITH THEM.

GENERAL! THE ENEMIES ARE SENDING FORTH BATTERING RAMS AND SCALING LADDERS!

WAIT UNTIL THE CARTS COME CLOSER!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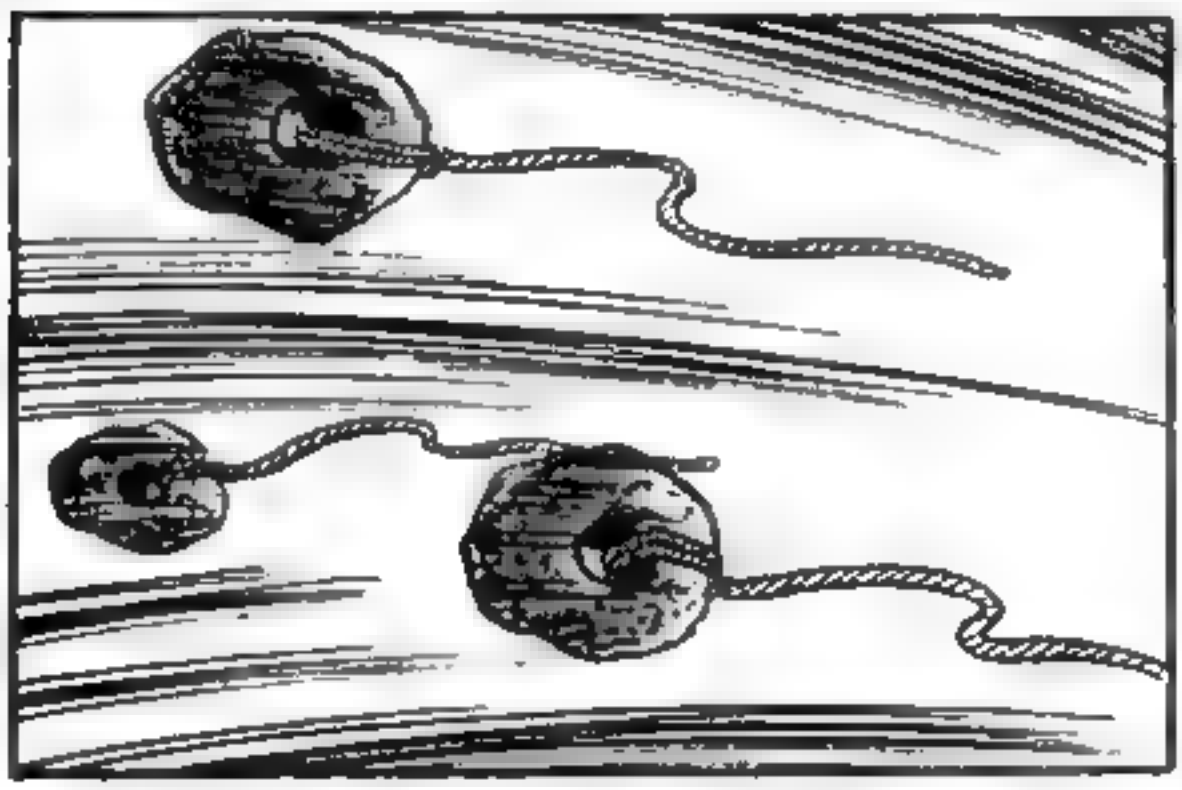
NOW!



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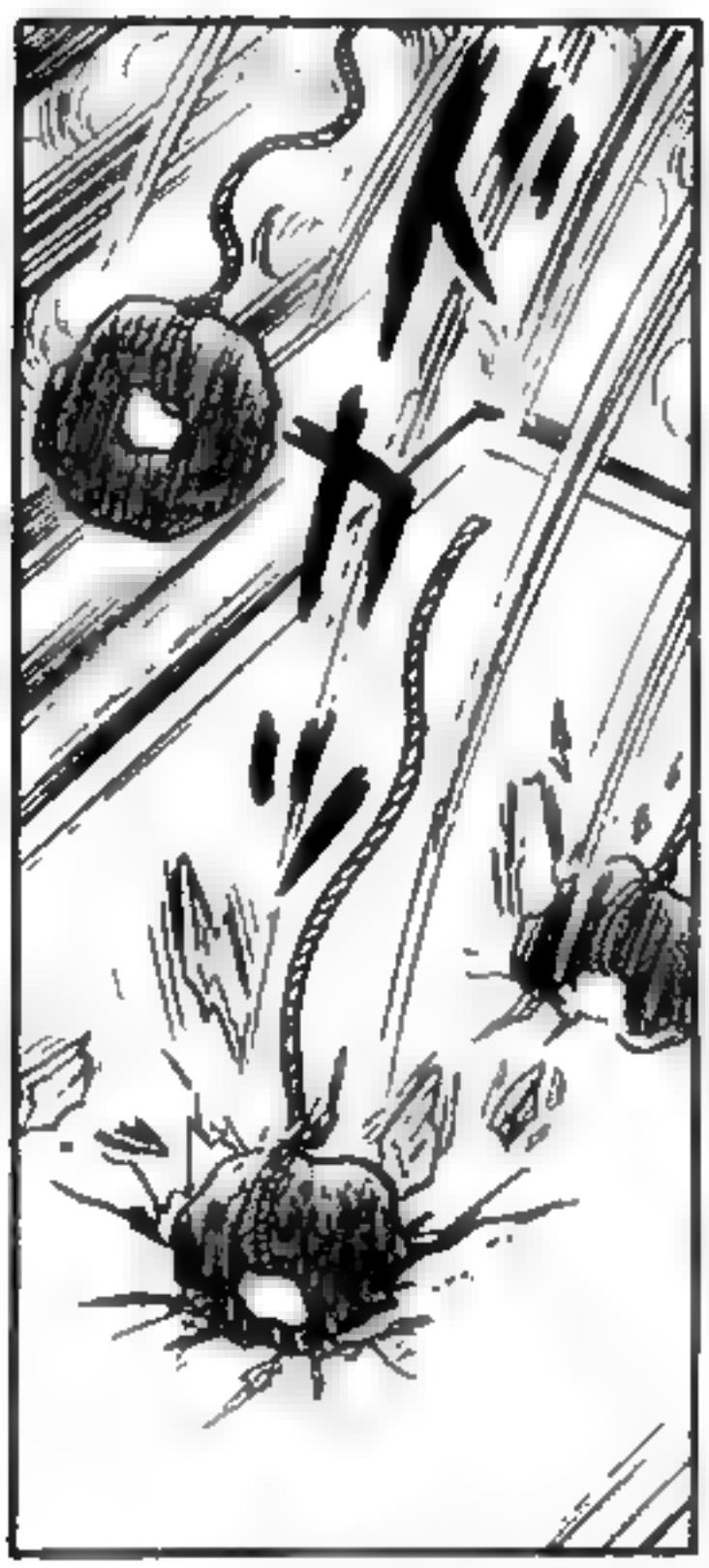

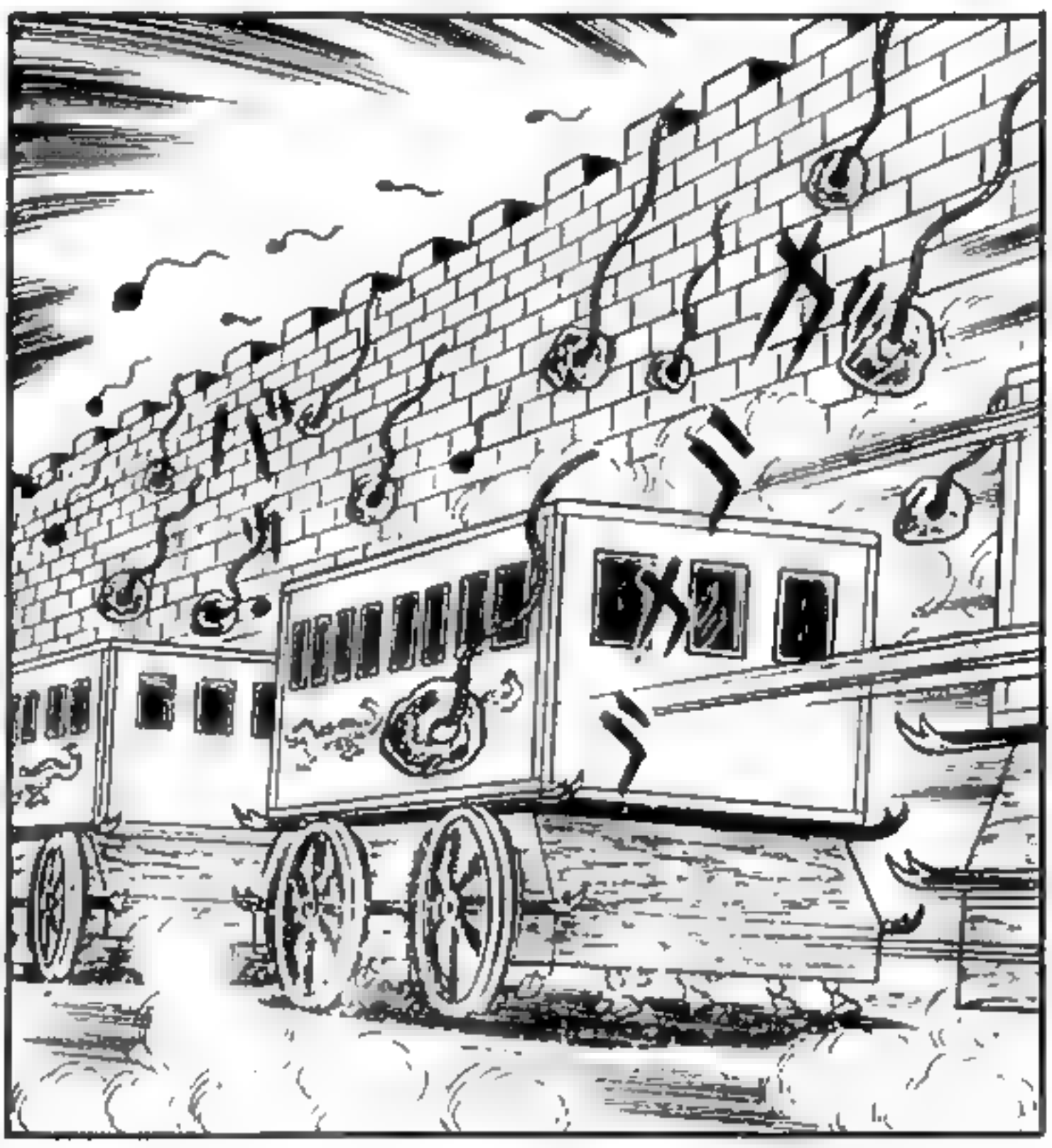

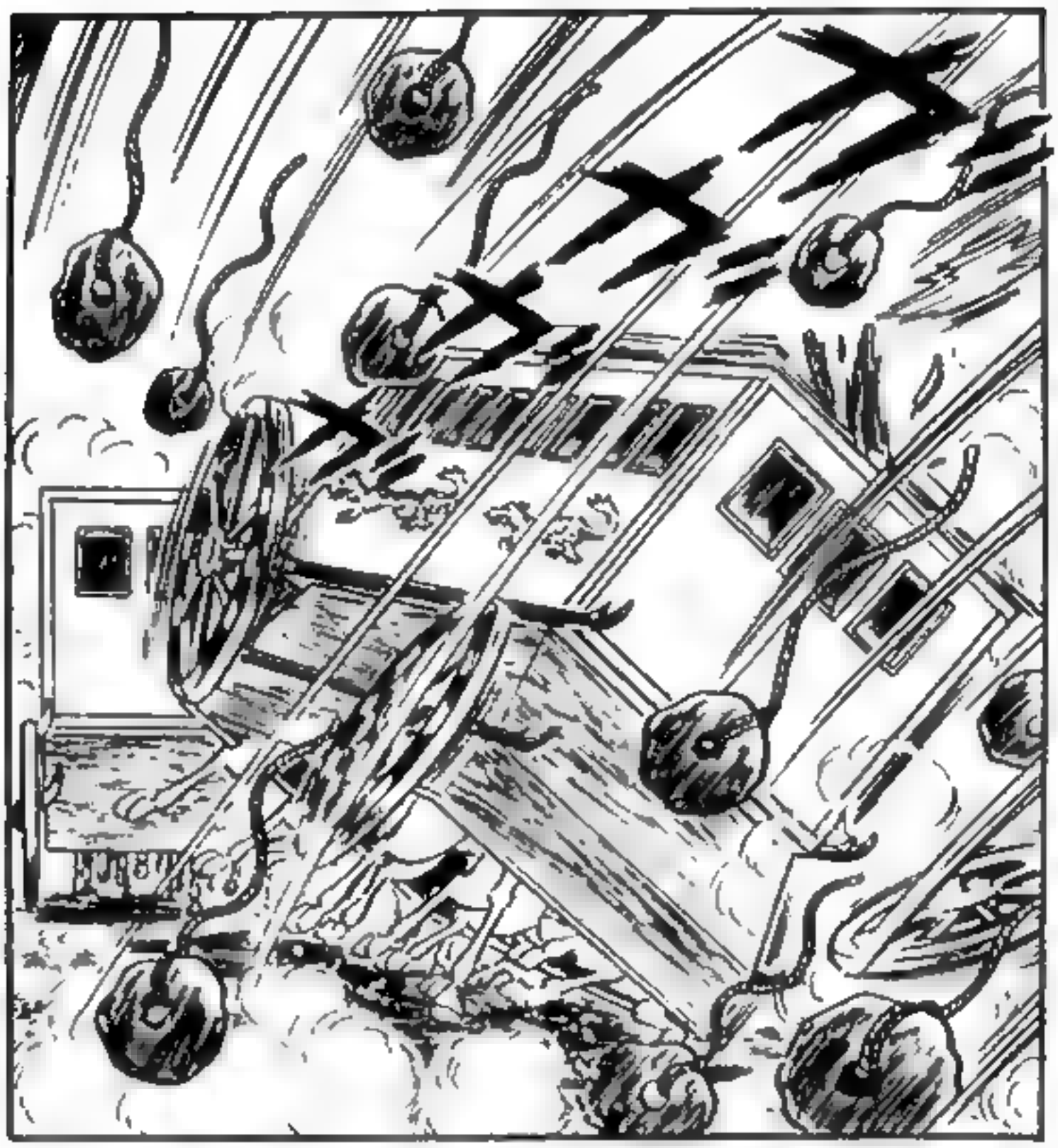

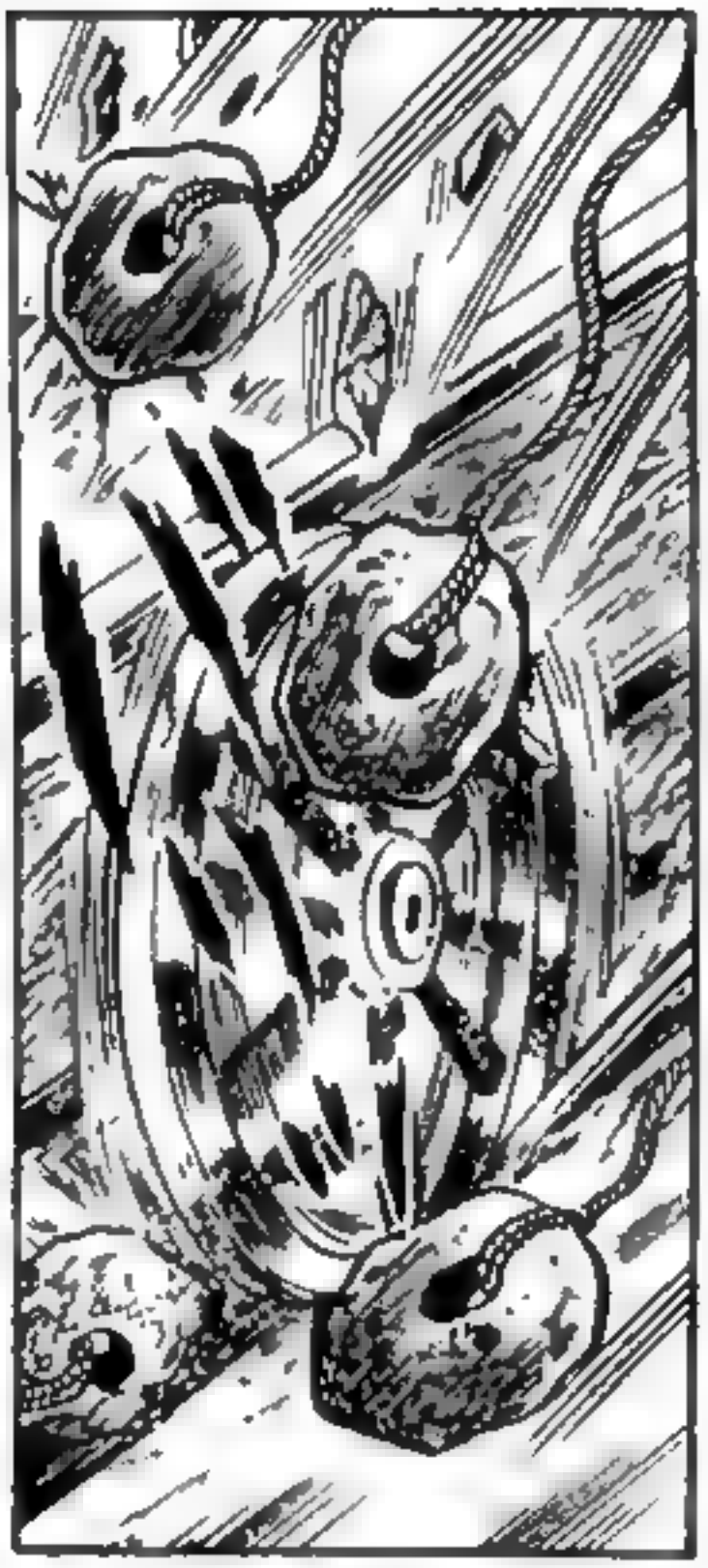

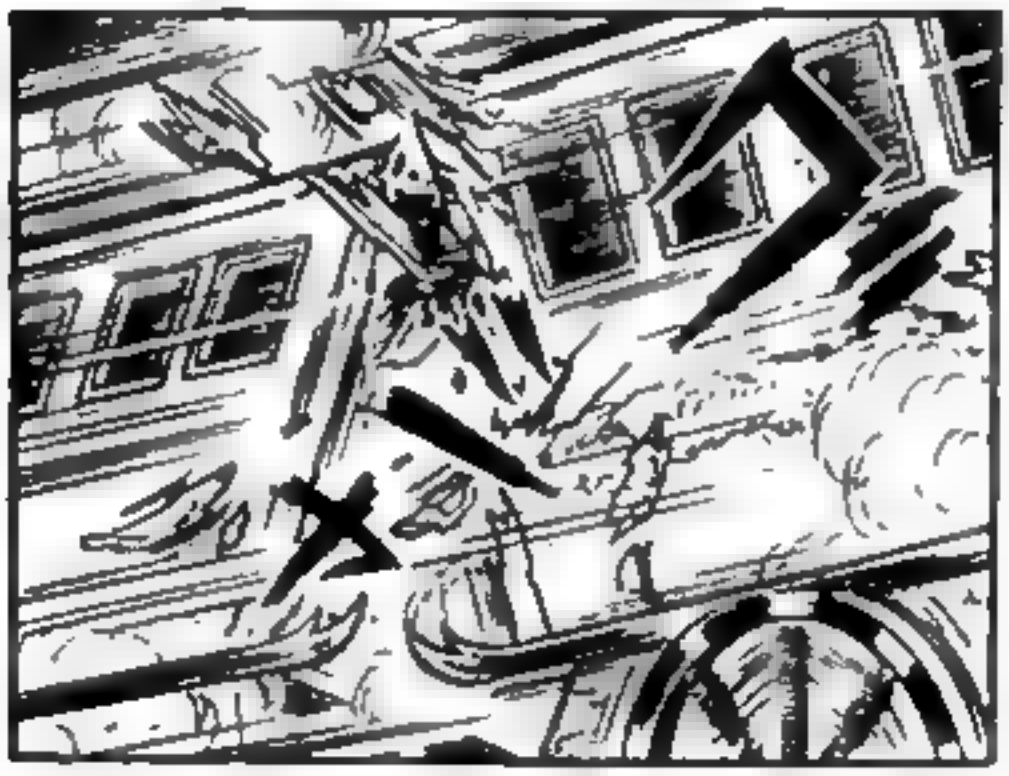

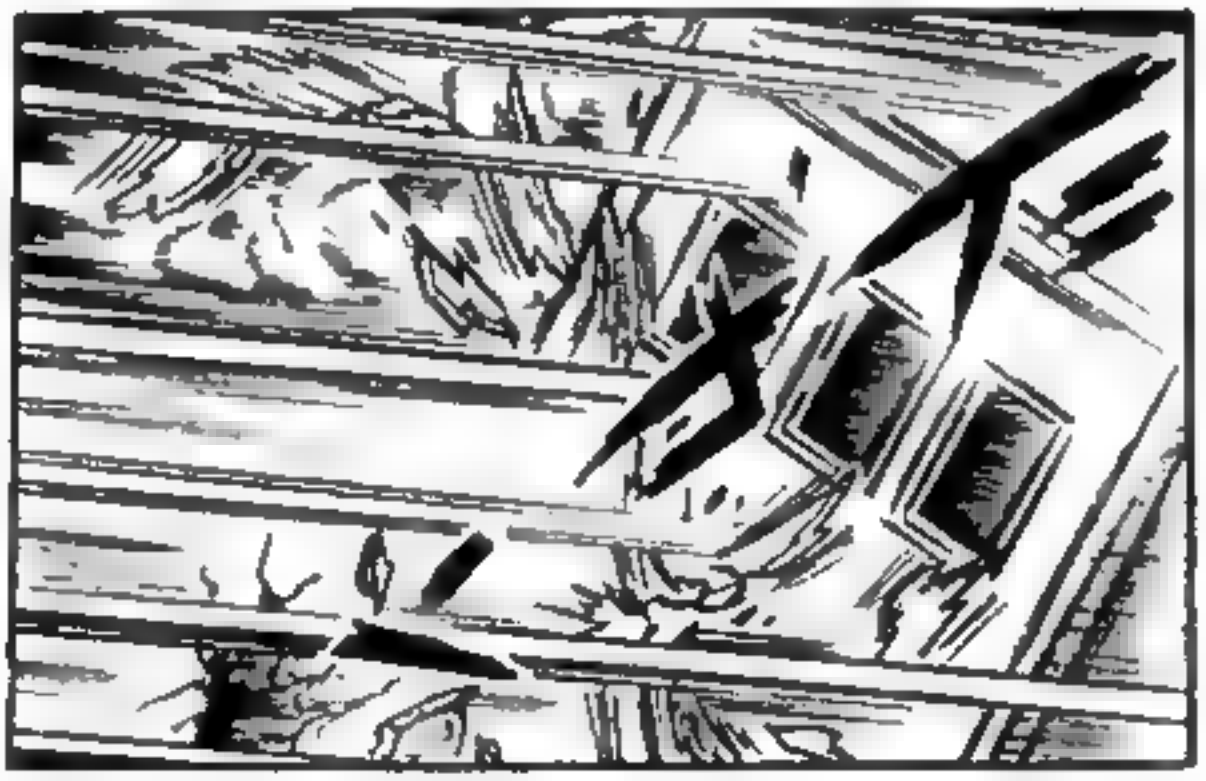

AGHH!

TELL THE LADDERS TO CLOSE IN QUICKLY!
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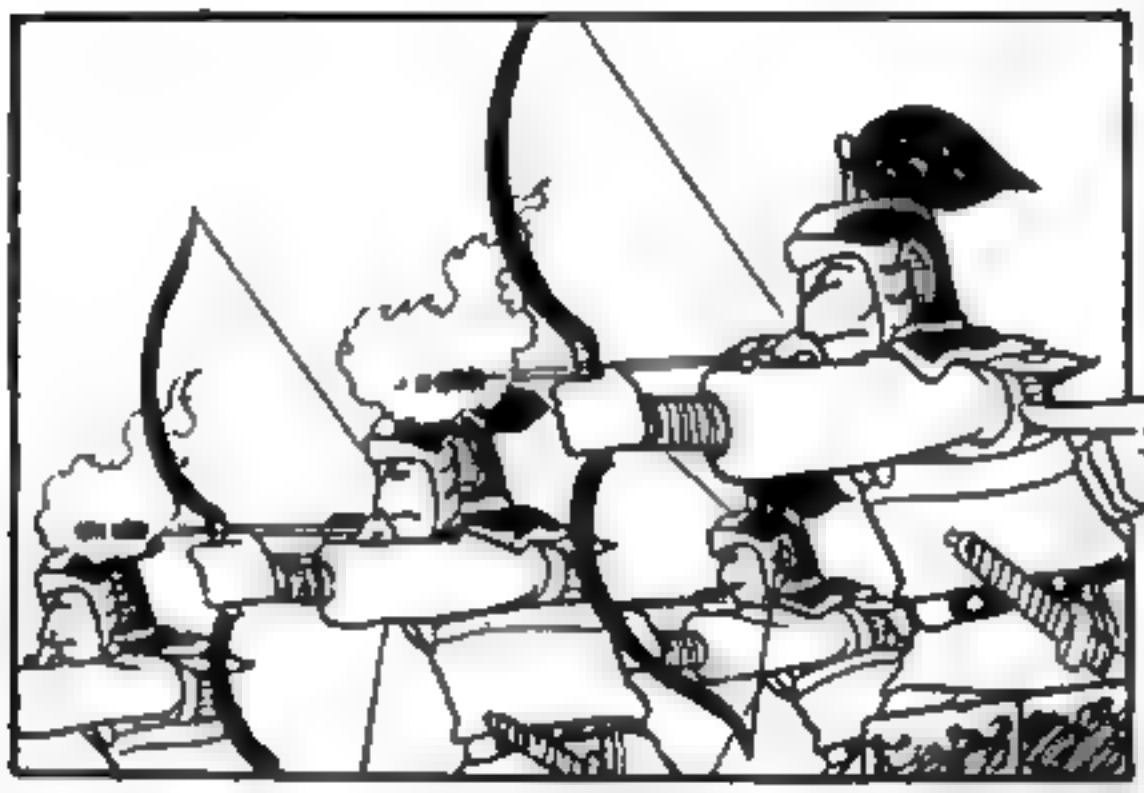
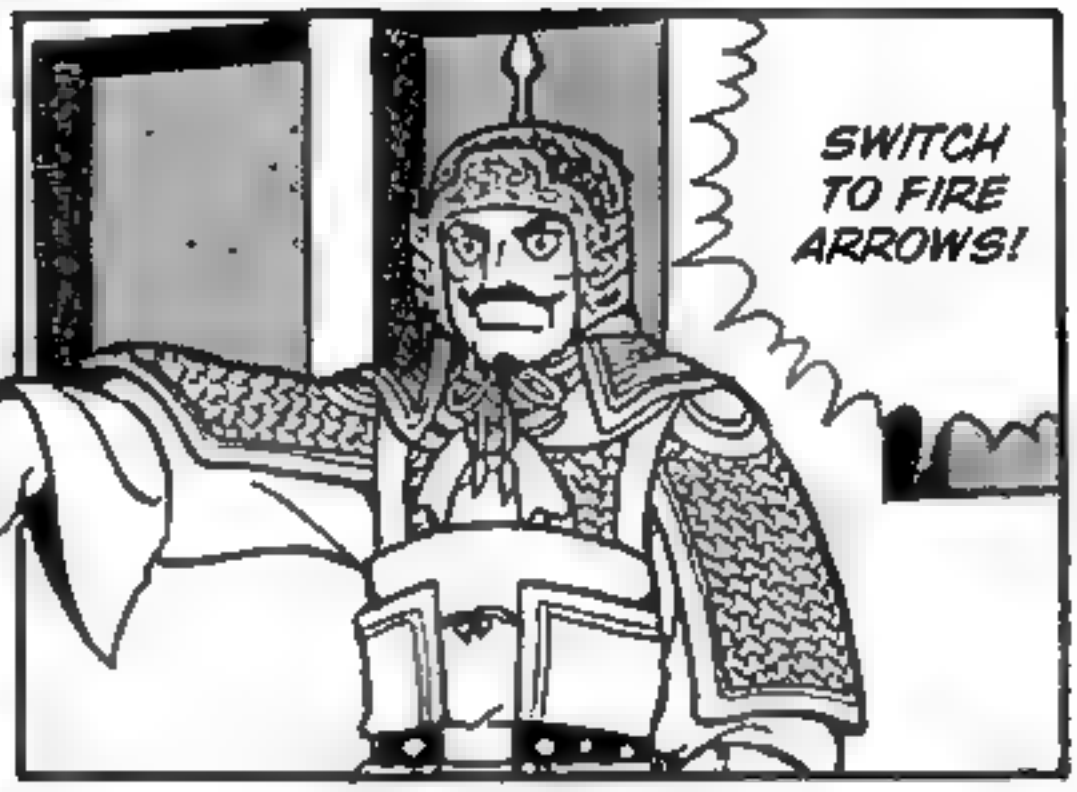
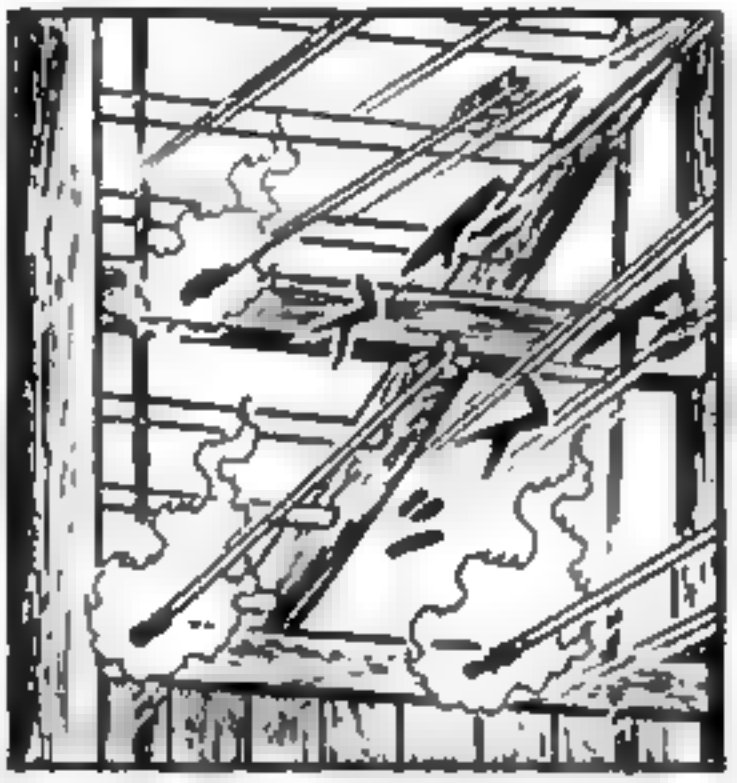
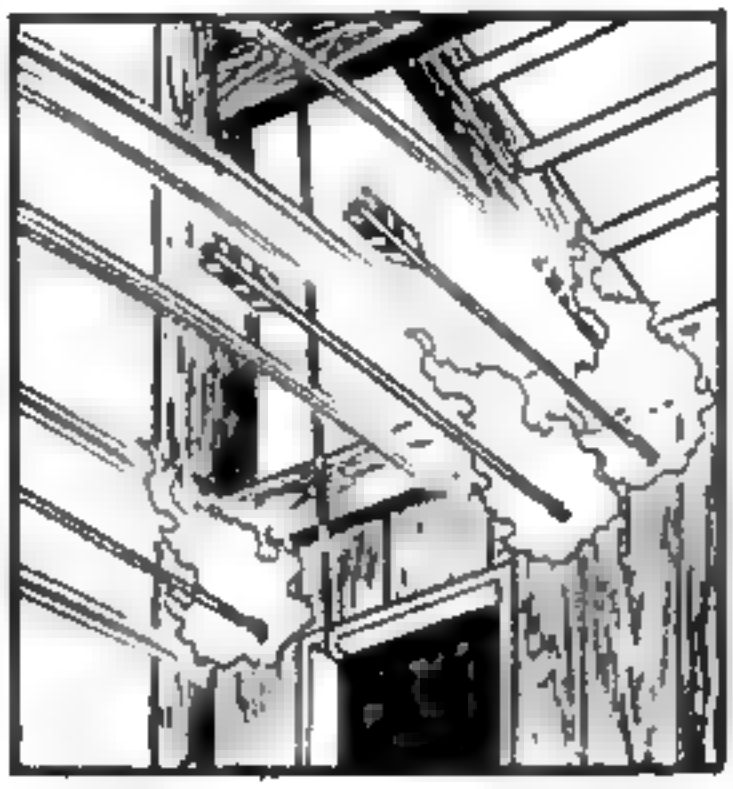
ガッ

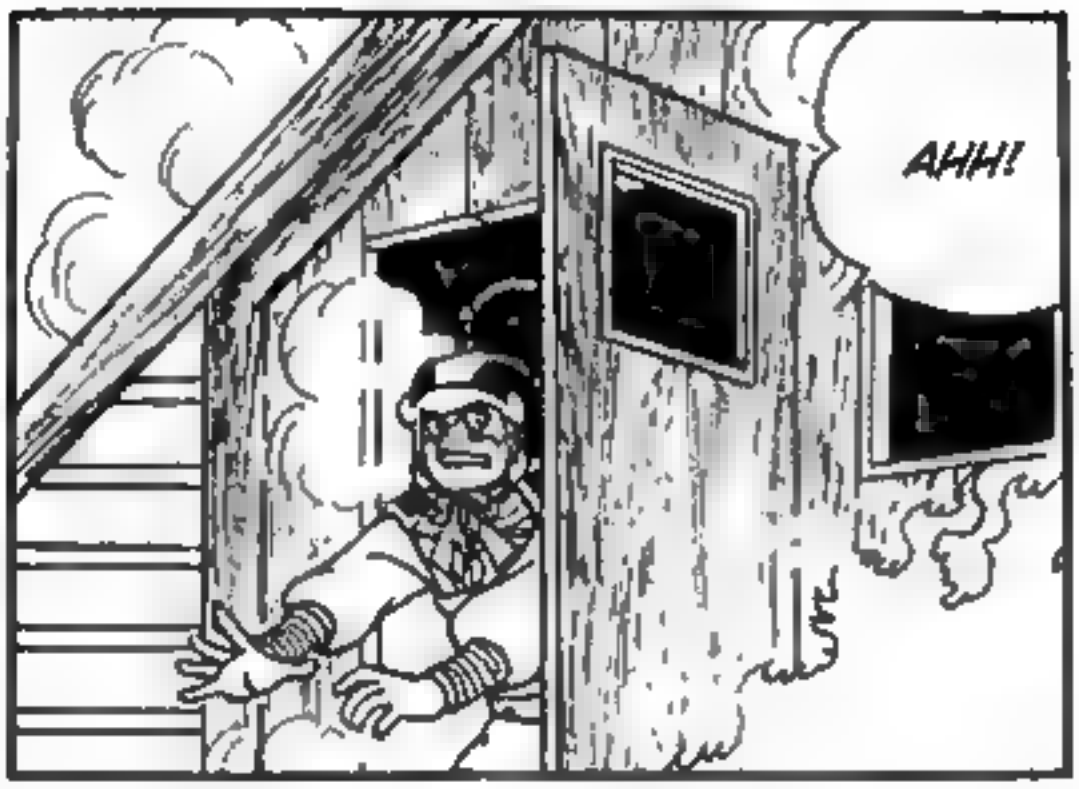


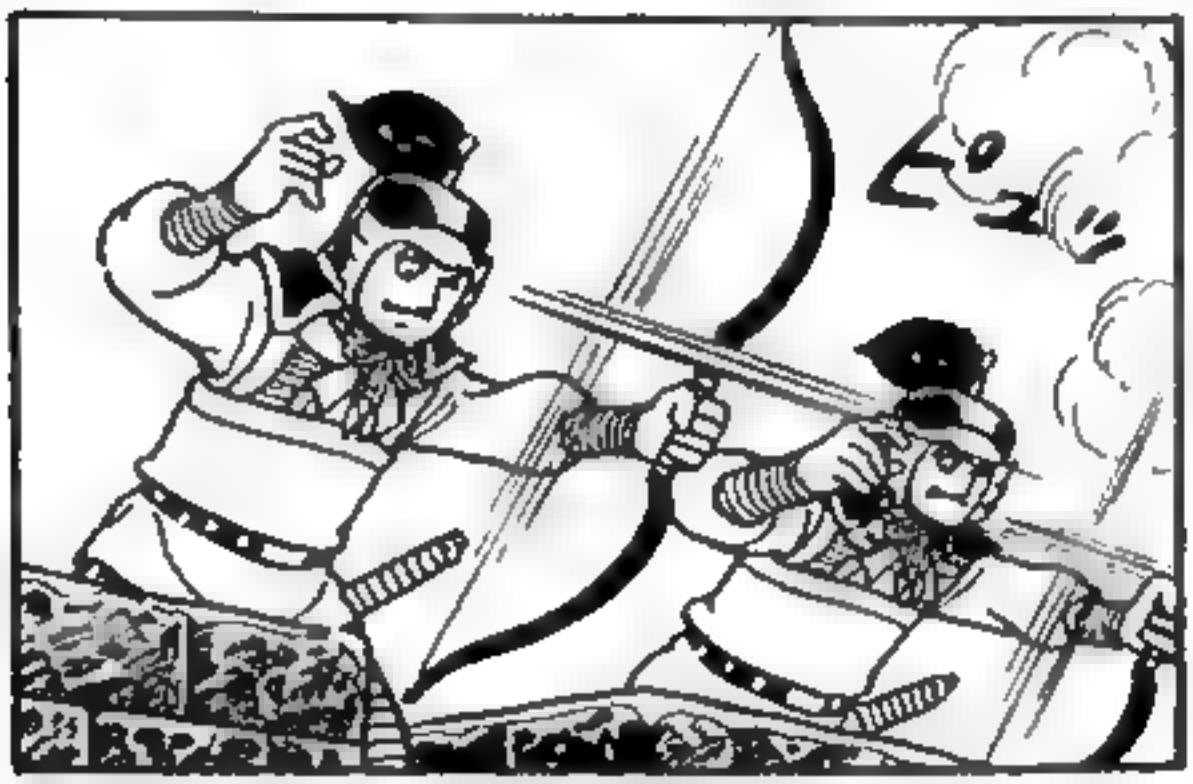

SWITCH TO FIRE ARROWS!

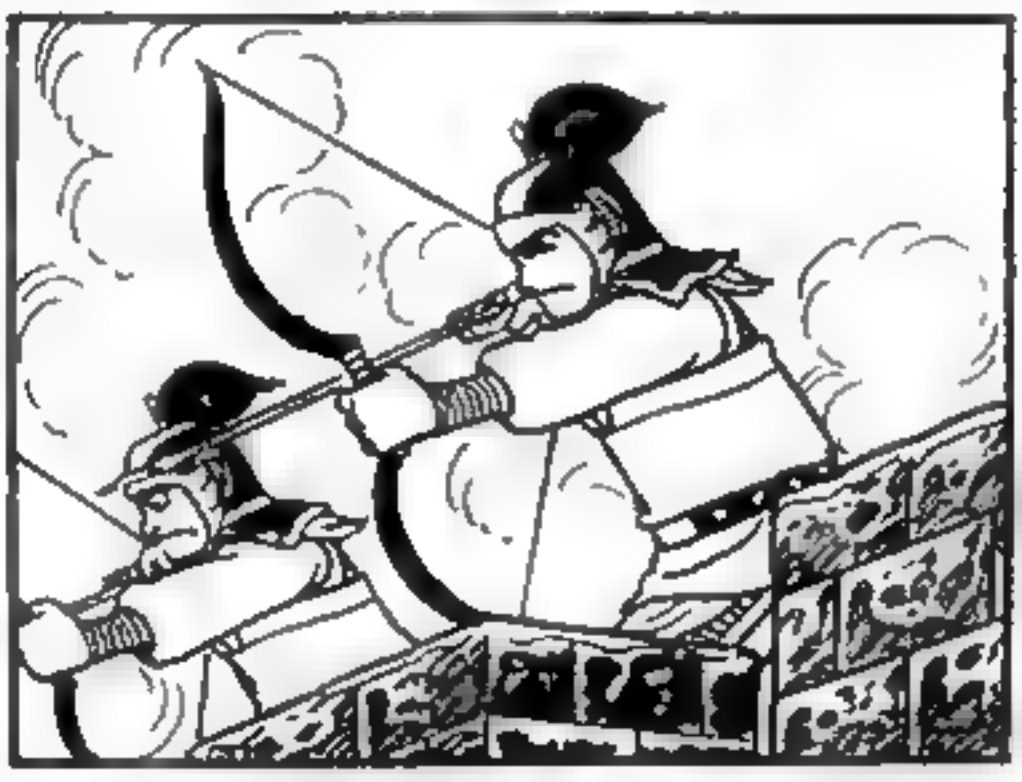


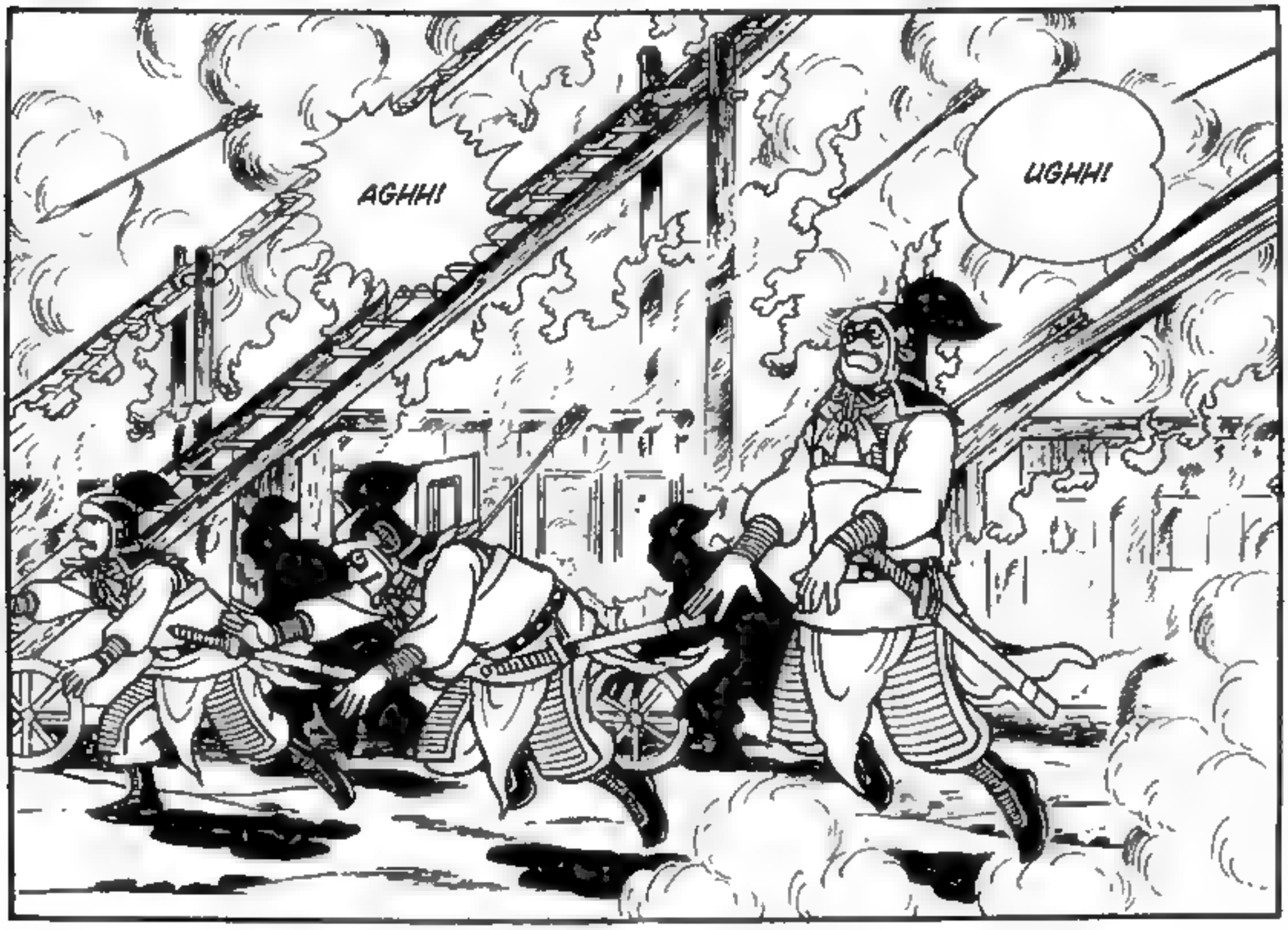


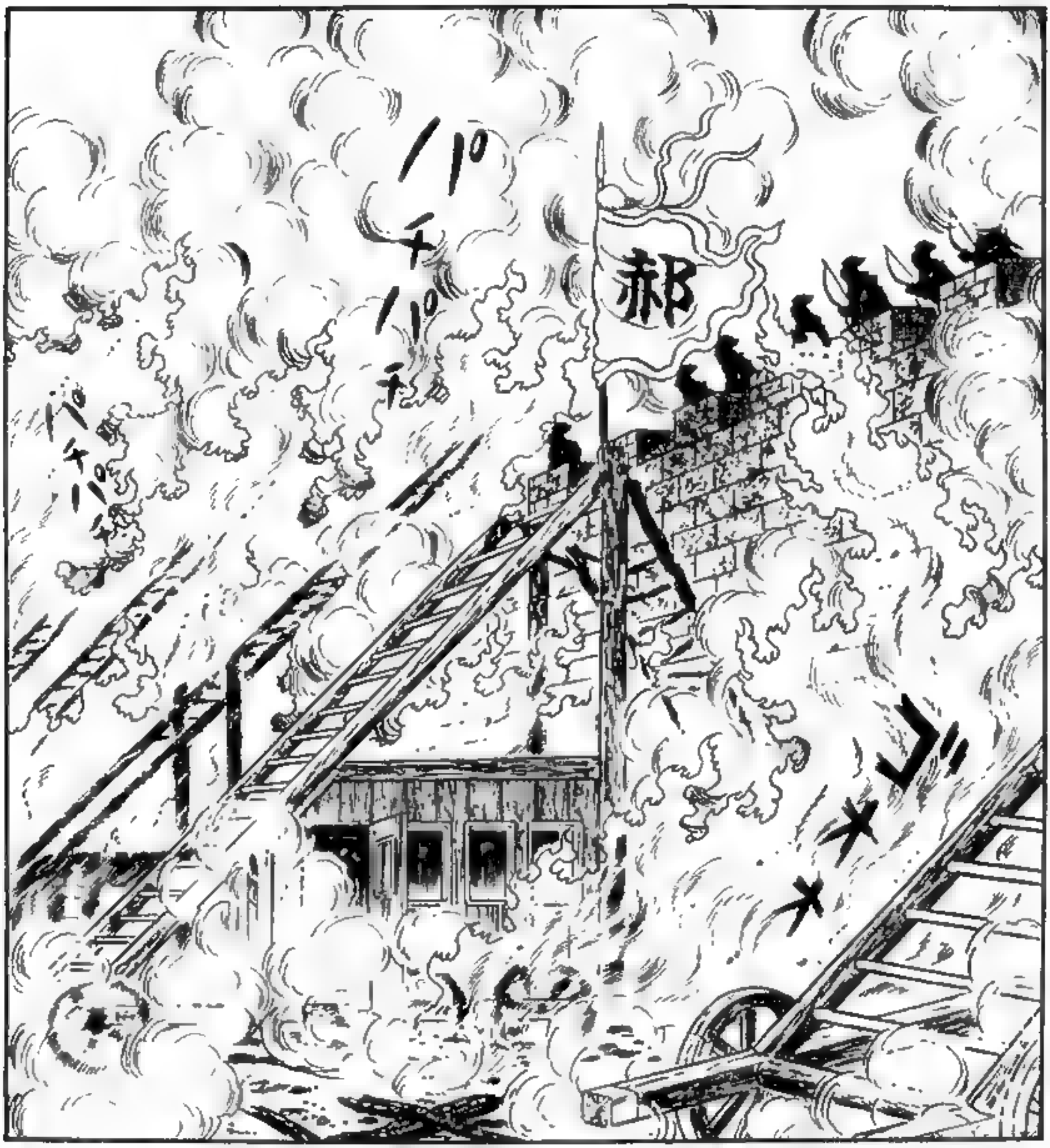
HOT!
HOT!
HOT!


AHH!






AGHH!
UGHH!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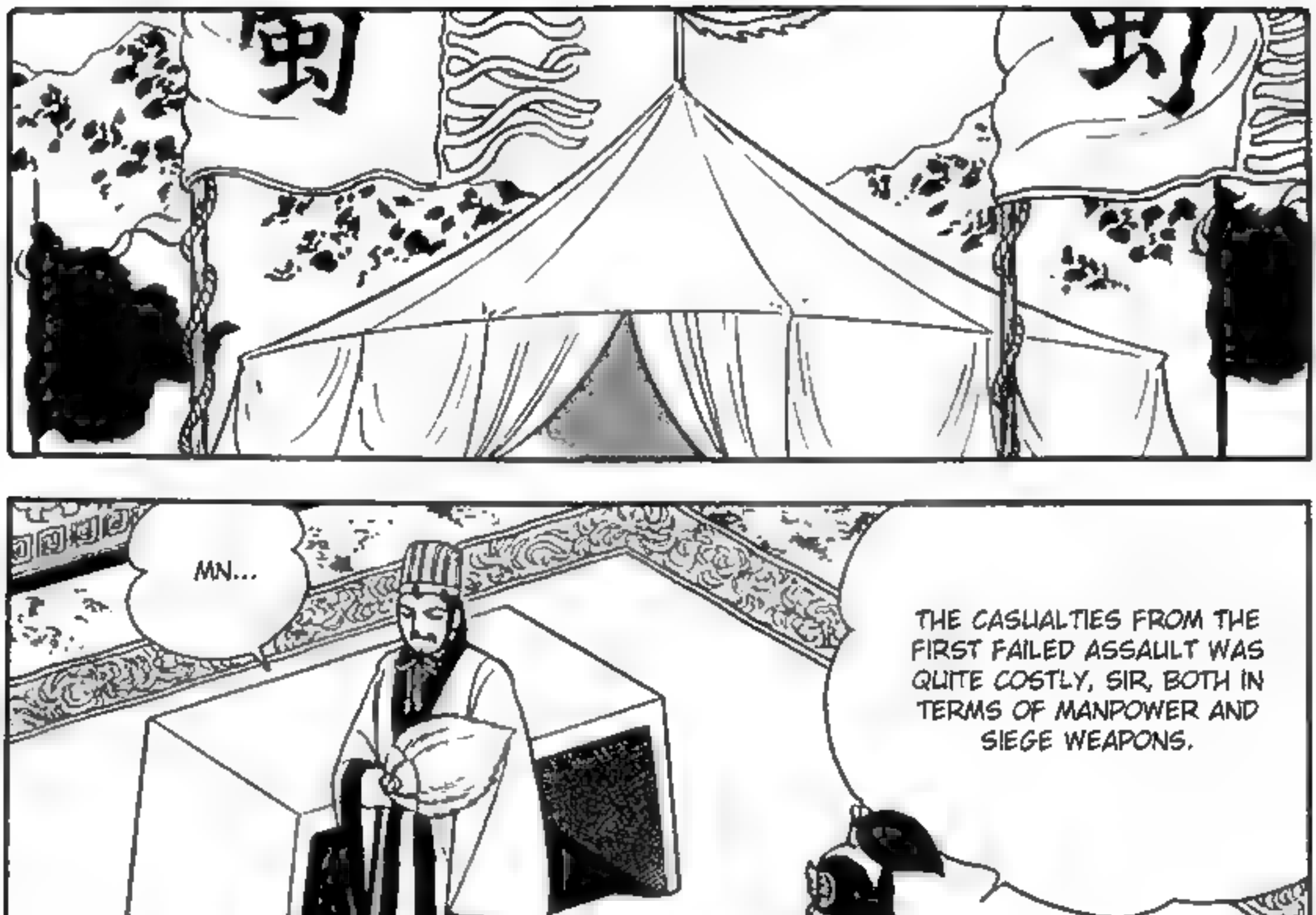
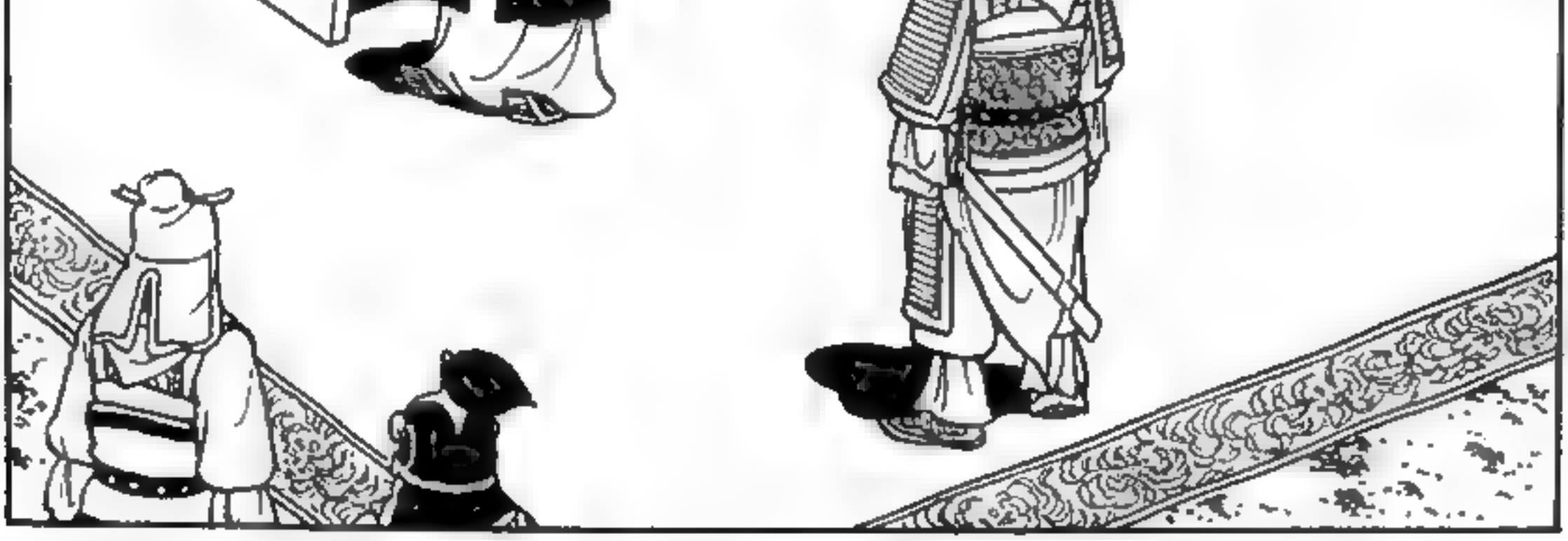
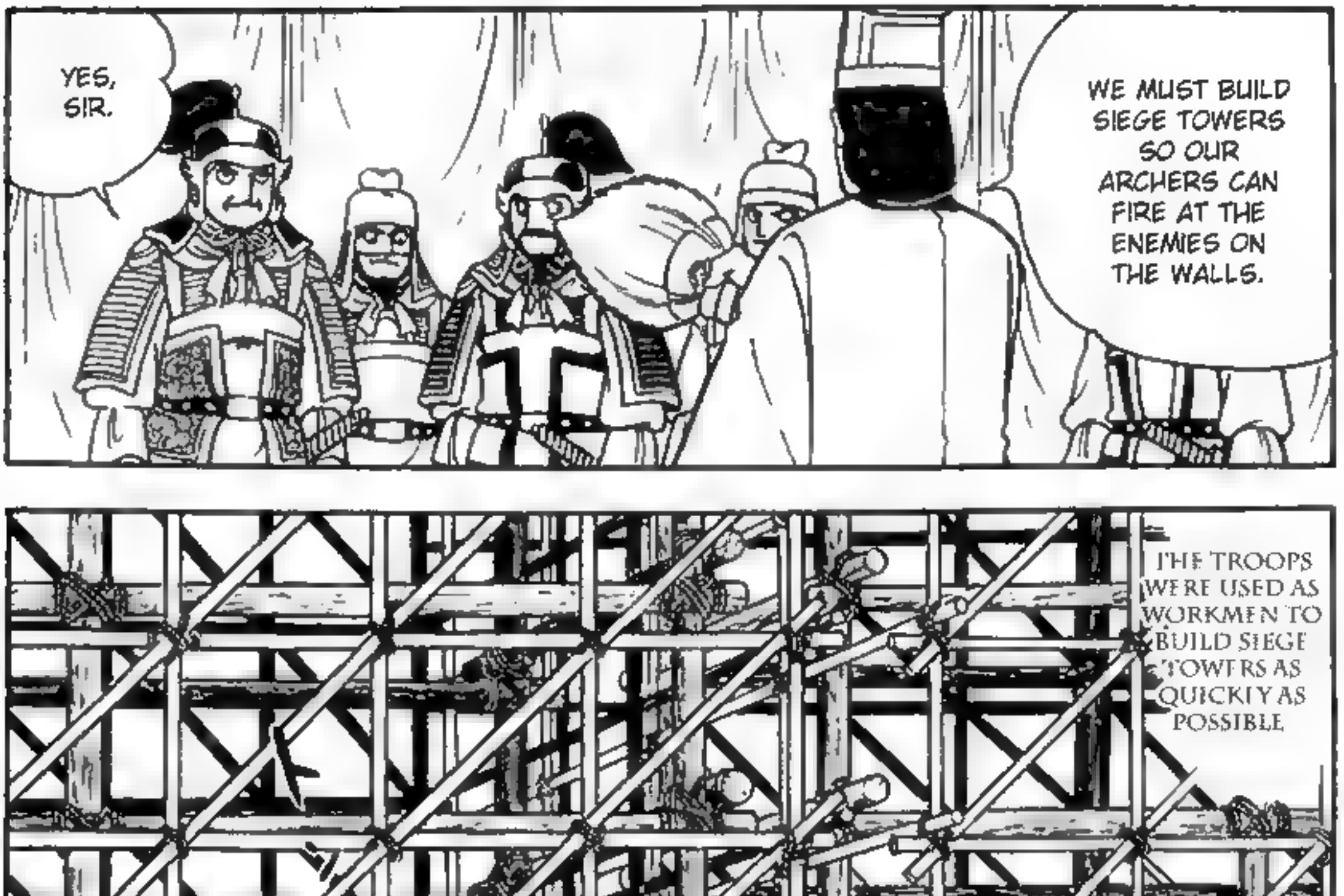
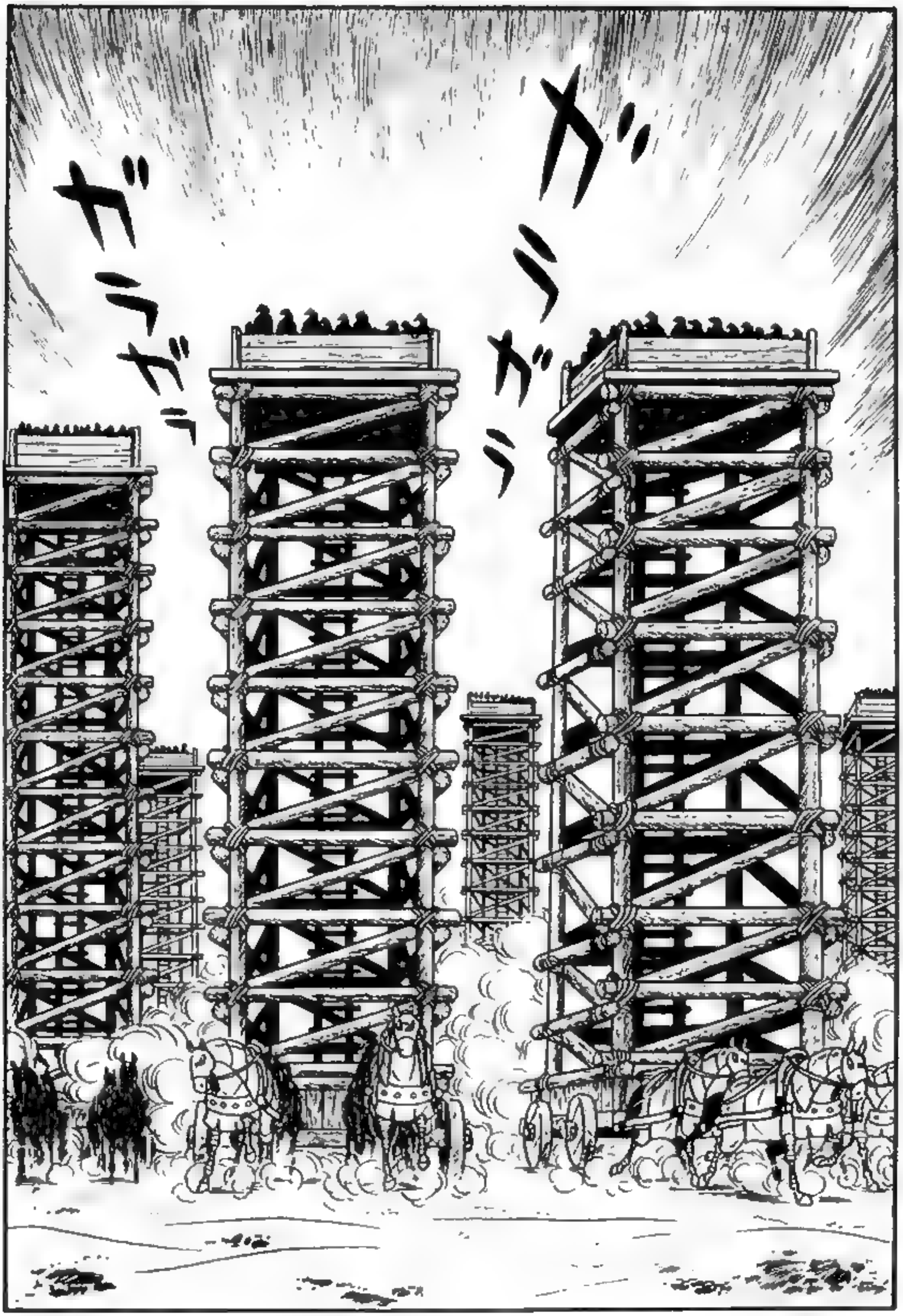

MN...
THE CASUALTIES FROM THE FIRST FAILED ASSAULT WAS QUITE COSTLY, SIR, BOTH IN TERMS OF MANPOWER AND SIEGE WEAPONS.


IF WE'RE BOGGED DOWN HERE IN CHENCANG TOO LONG, IT'LL GIVE TIME FOR WEI REINFORCEMENTS TO ARRIVE, MAKING THINGS EVEN HARDER FOR US. WE MUST TAKE THE CITY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, EVEN IF IT'S COSTLY...

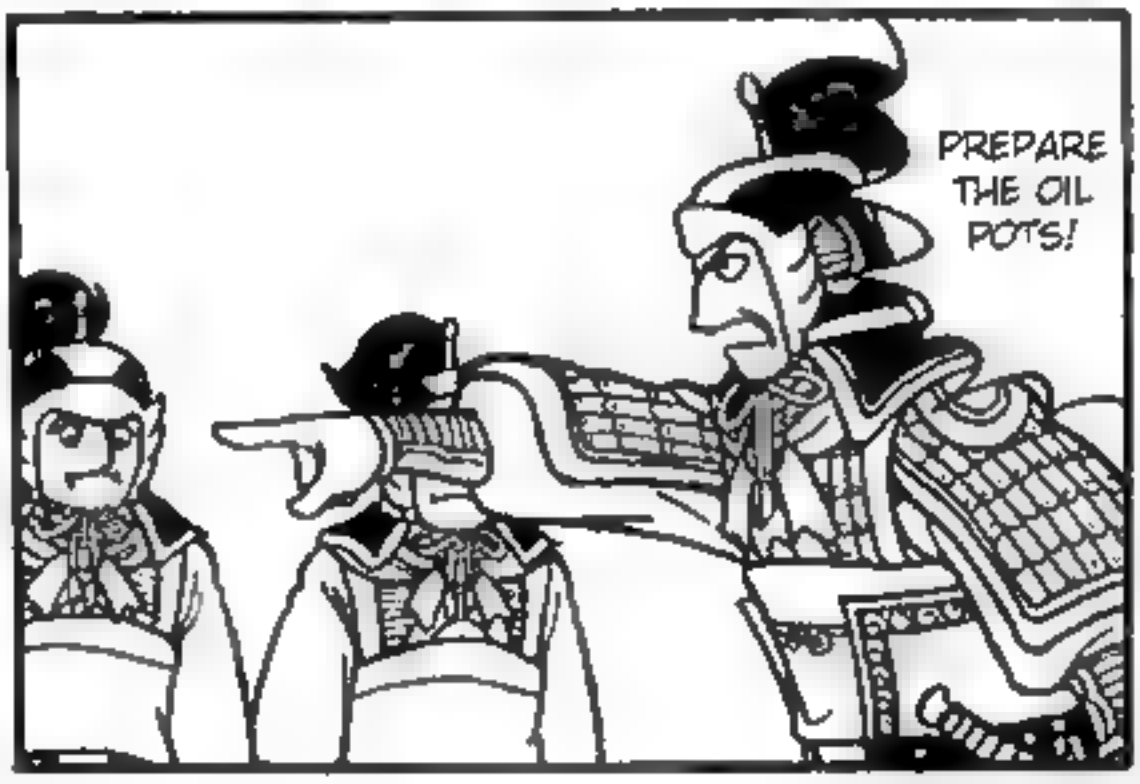

YES, SIR.
WE MUST BUILD SIEGE TOWERS SO OUR ARCHERS CAN FIRE AT THE ENEMIES ON THE WALLS.
THE TROOPS WERE USED AS WORKMEN TO BUILD SIEGE TOWERS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

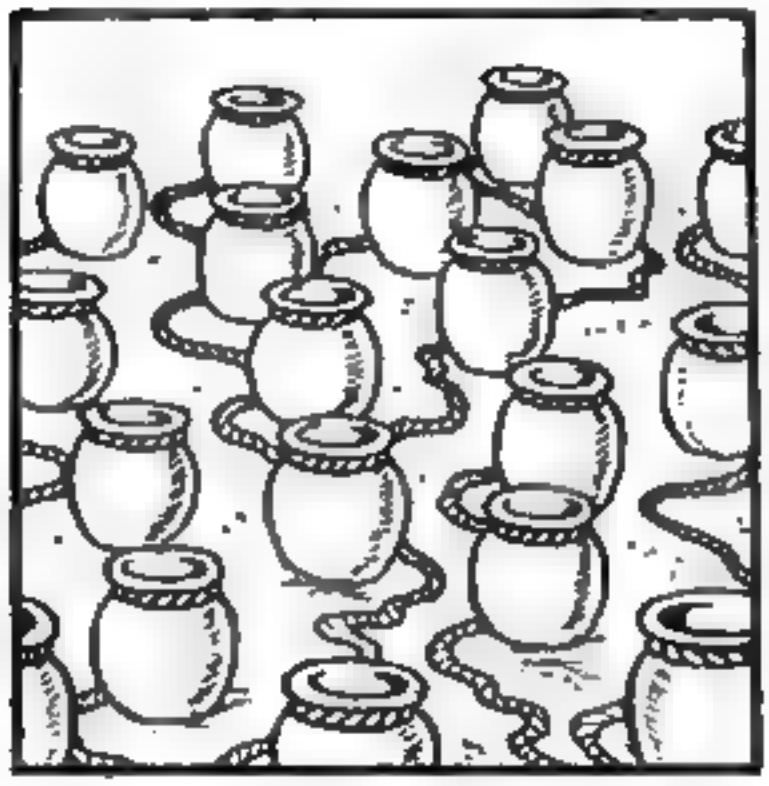


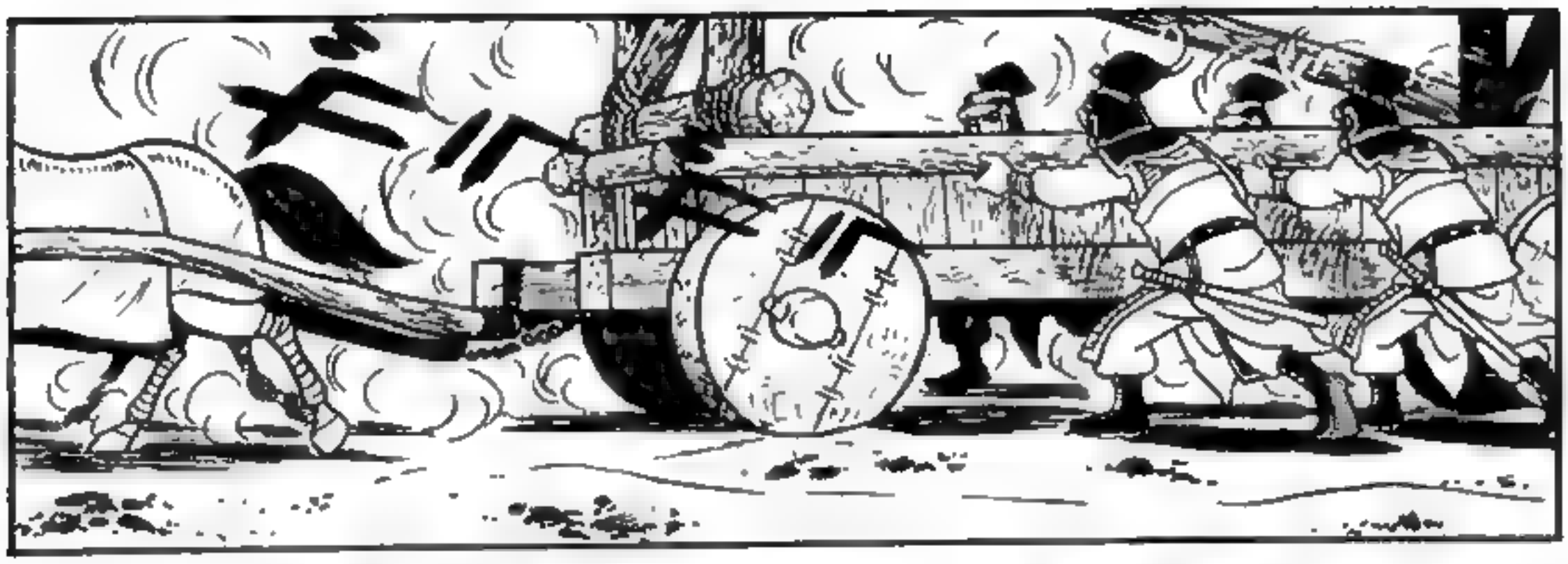
THROW OIL POTS AND FOLLOW UP WITH FIRE.

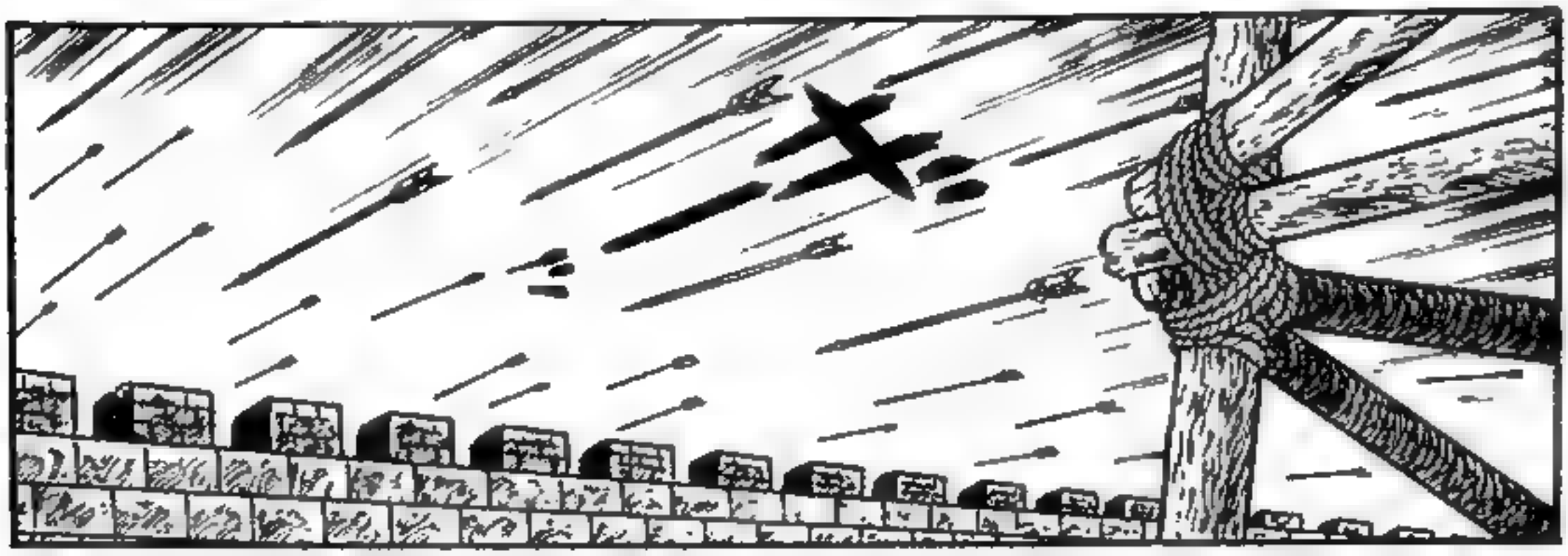
HMPH, ALL THINGS MADE OF WOOD ARE QUICK TO BURN.
THE ENEMIES ARE SENDING FORTH SIEGE TOWERS THIS TIME, GENERAL.

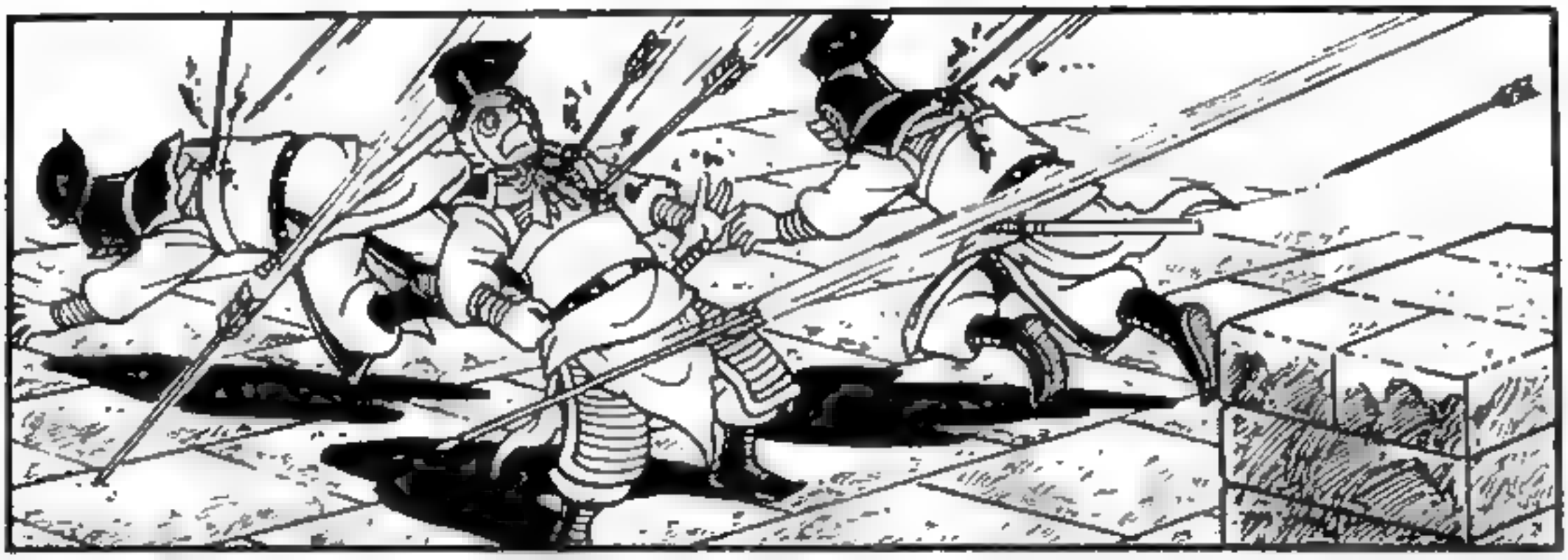
YES, SIR.


PREPARE THE OIL POTS!

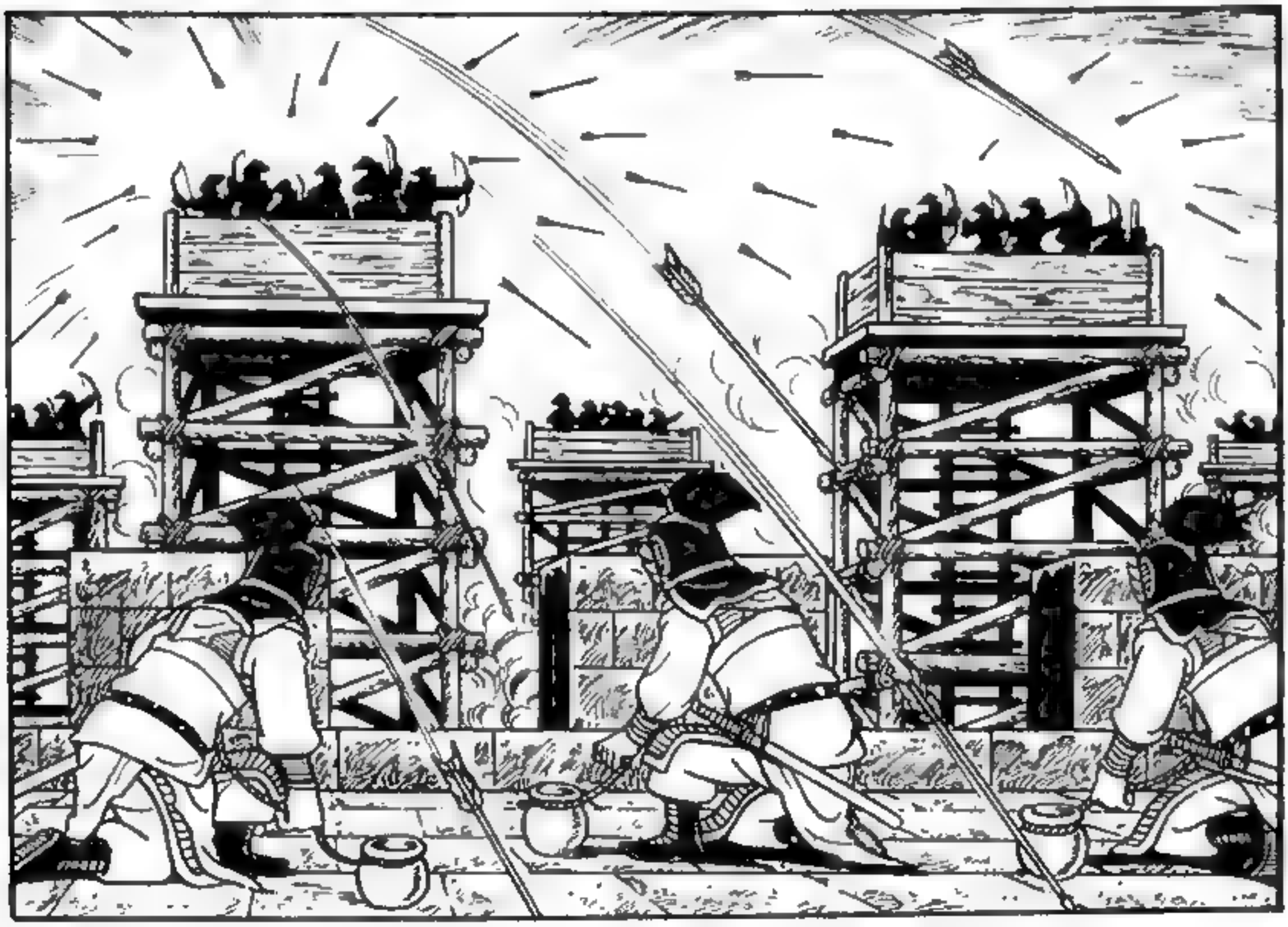


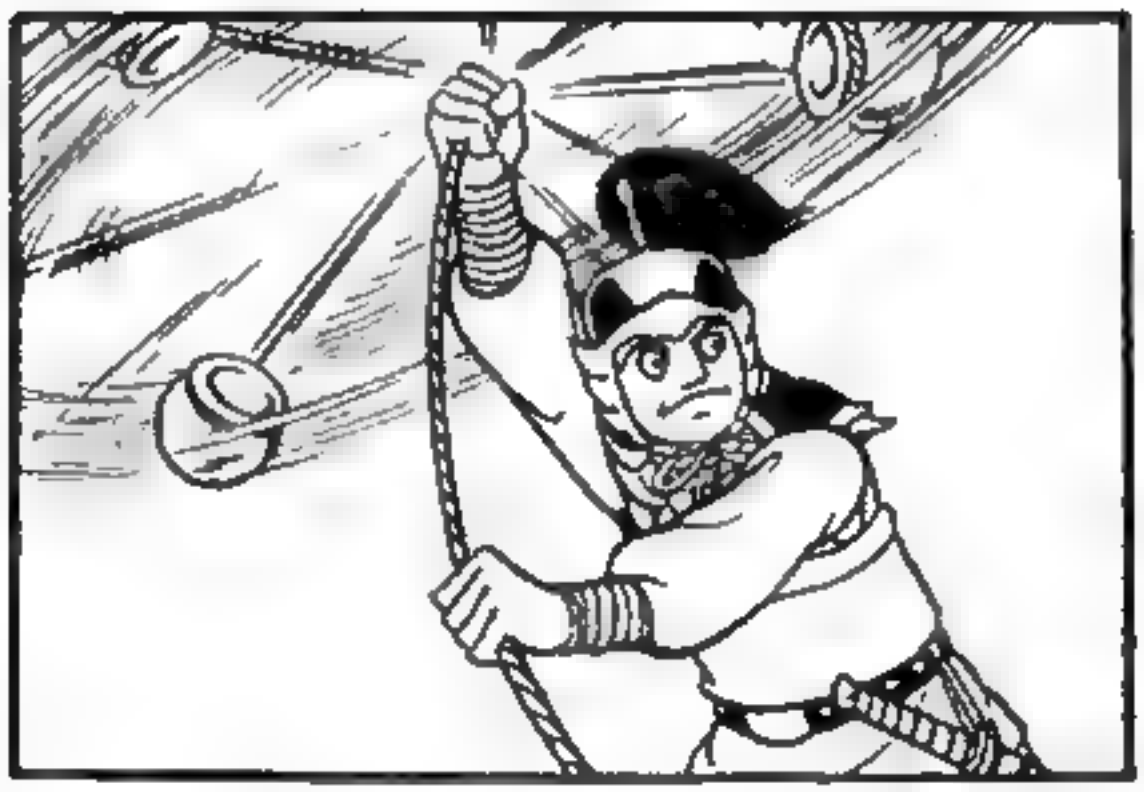




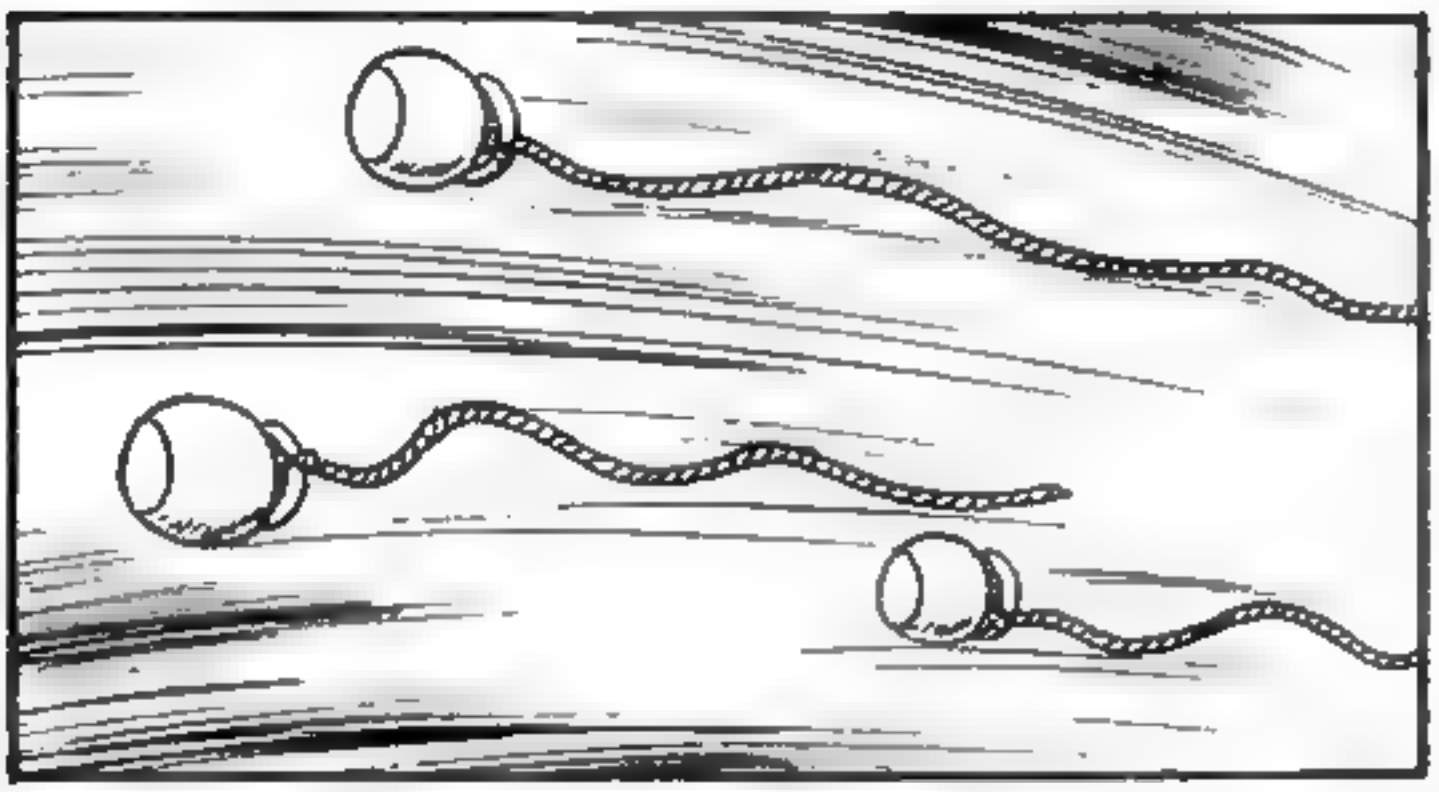


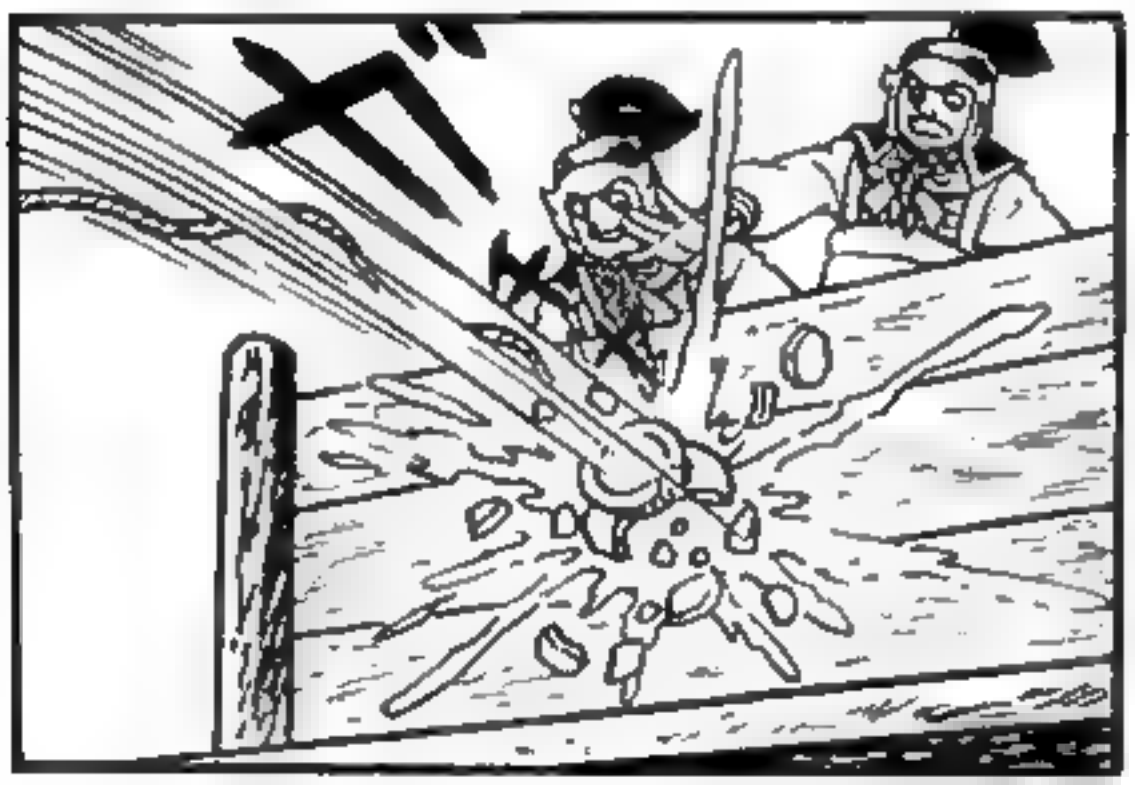
HIDE BEHIND THE BATTLEMENTS! WAIT UNTIL THE TOWERS COME CLOSER!

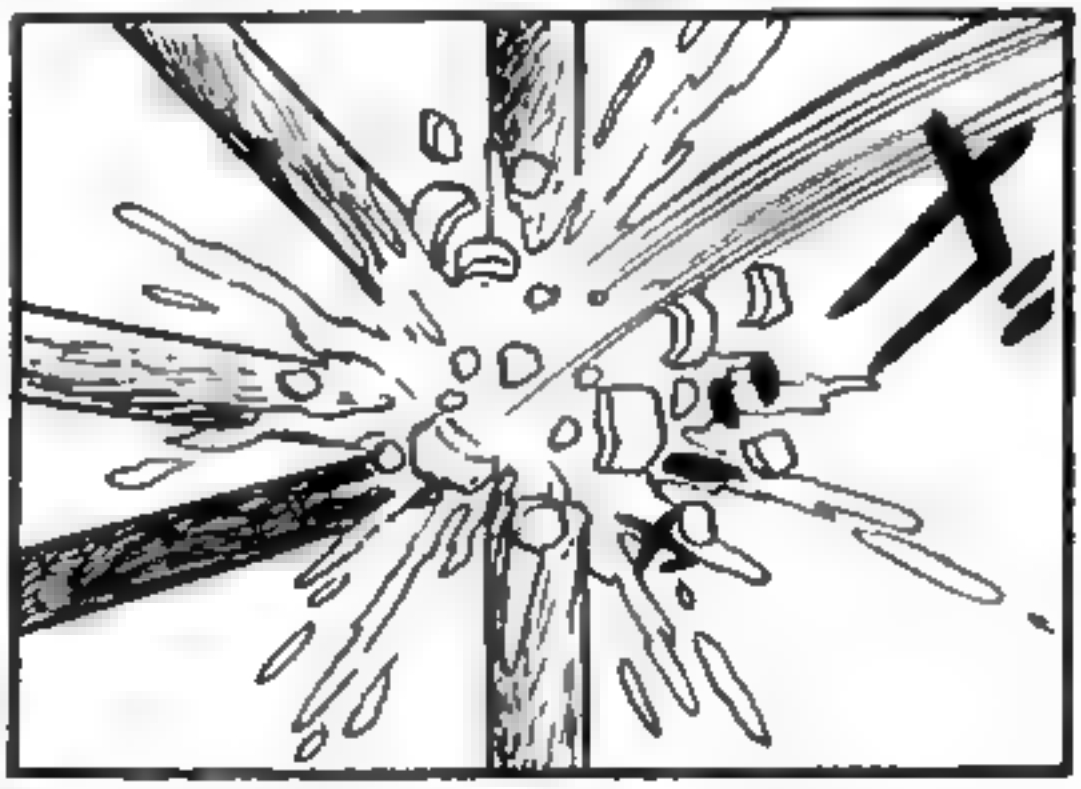


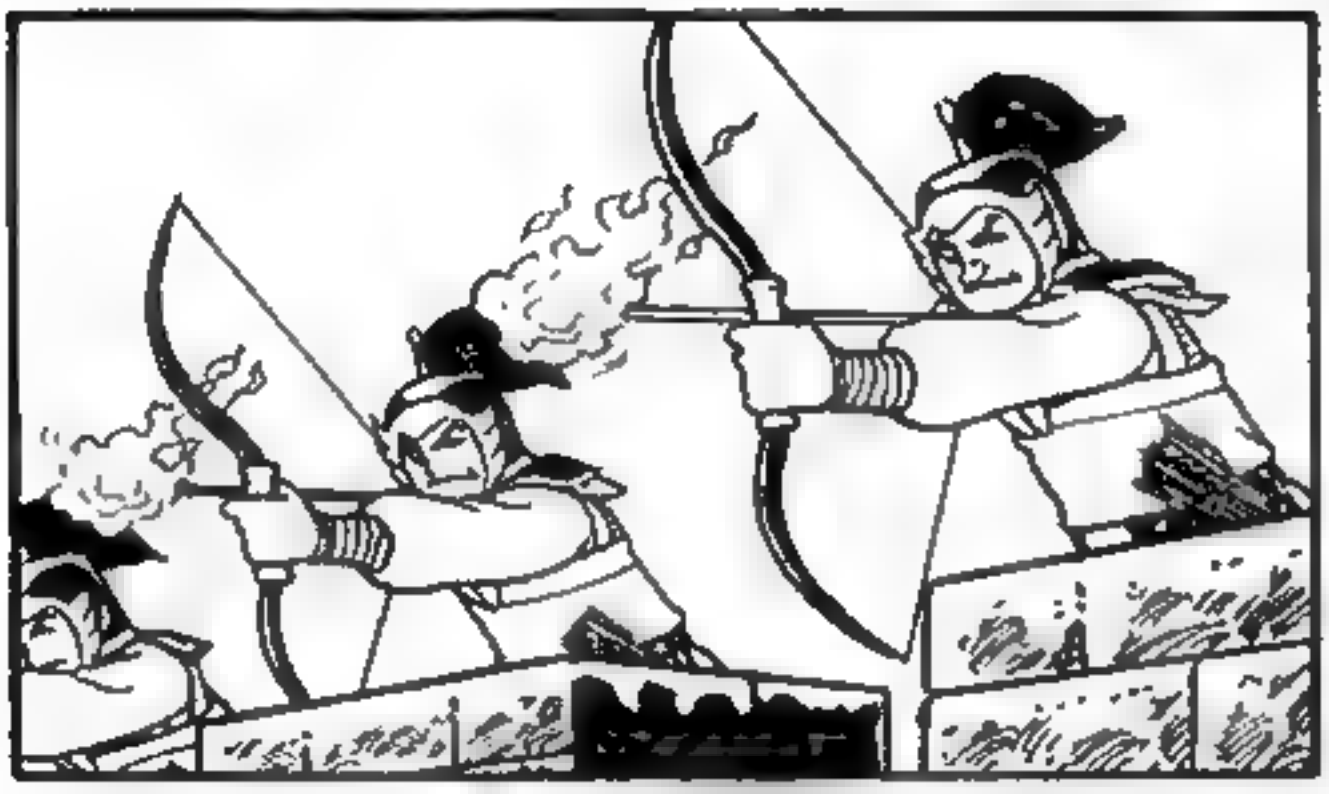


NOW!

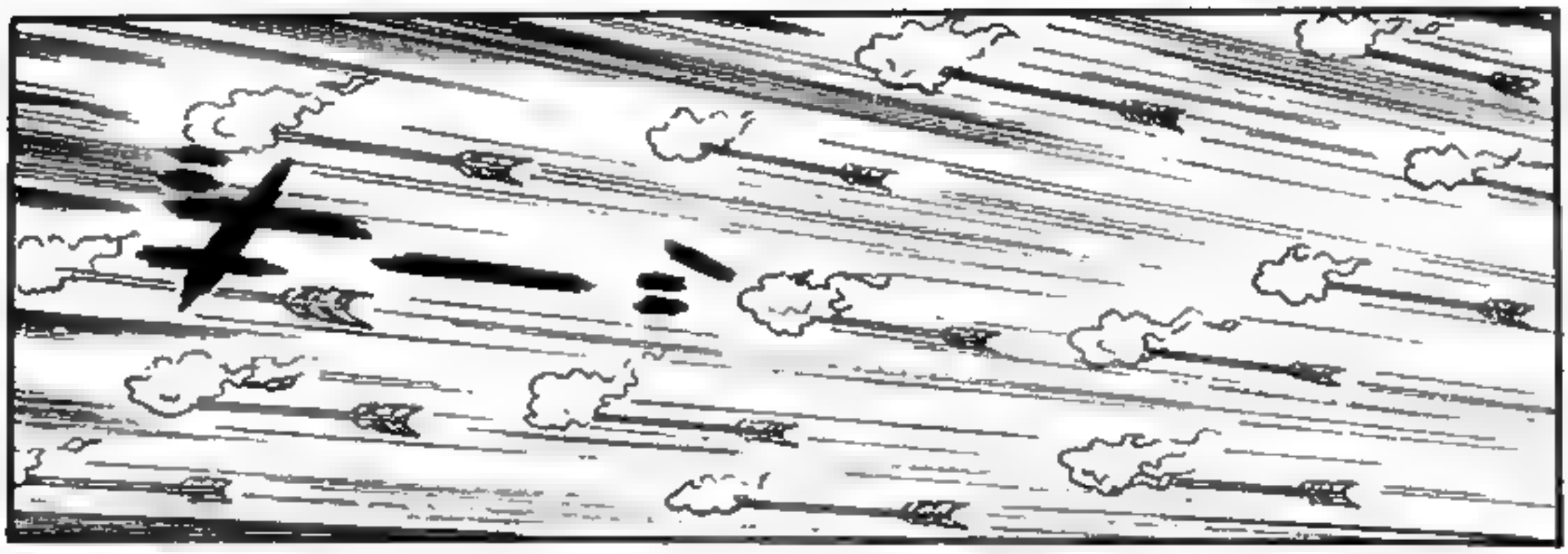


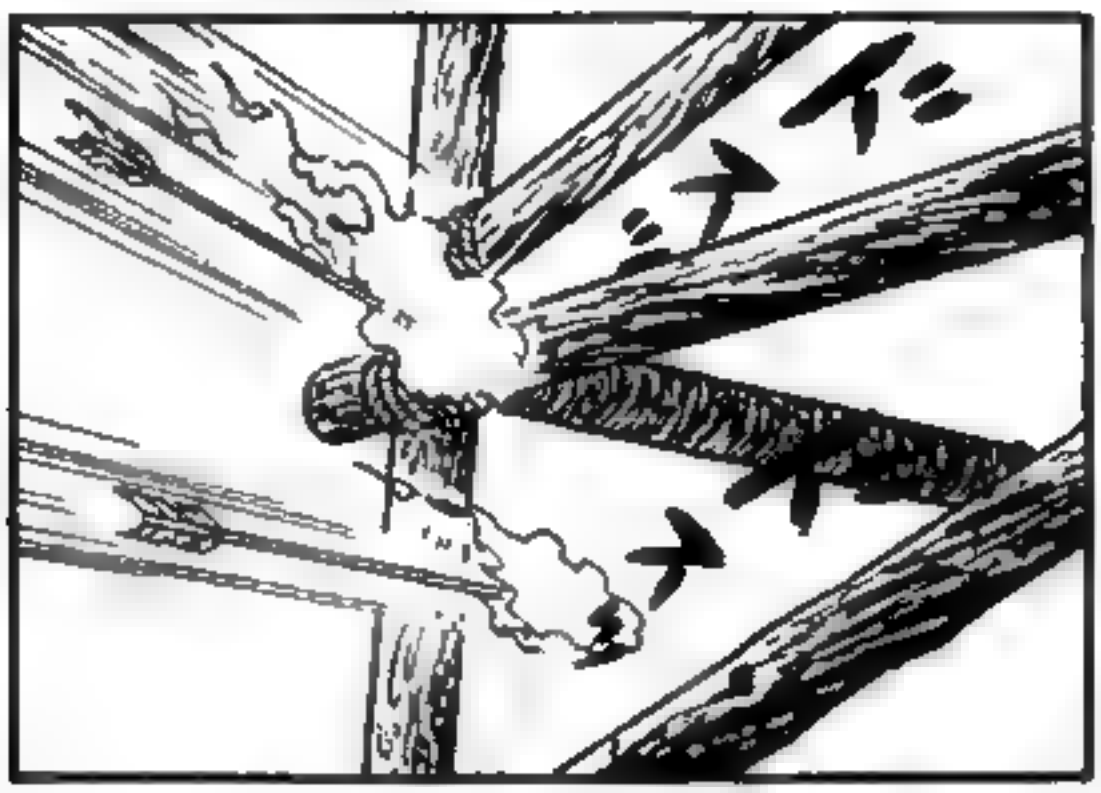


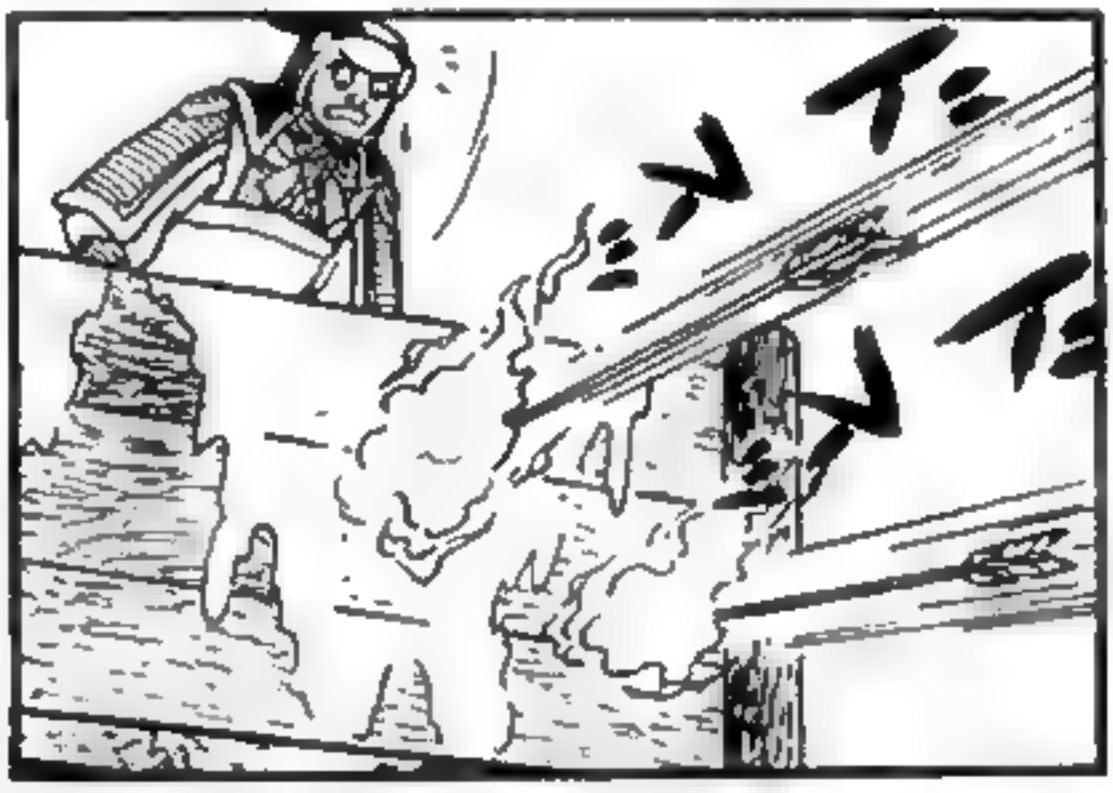




NOW
SHOOT
THE FIRE
ARROWS!





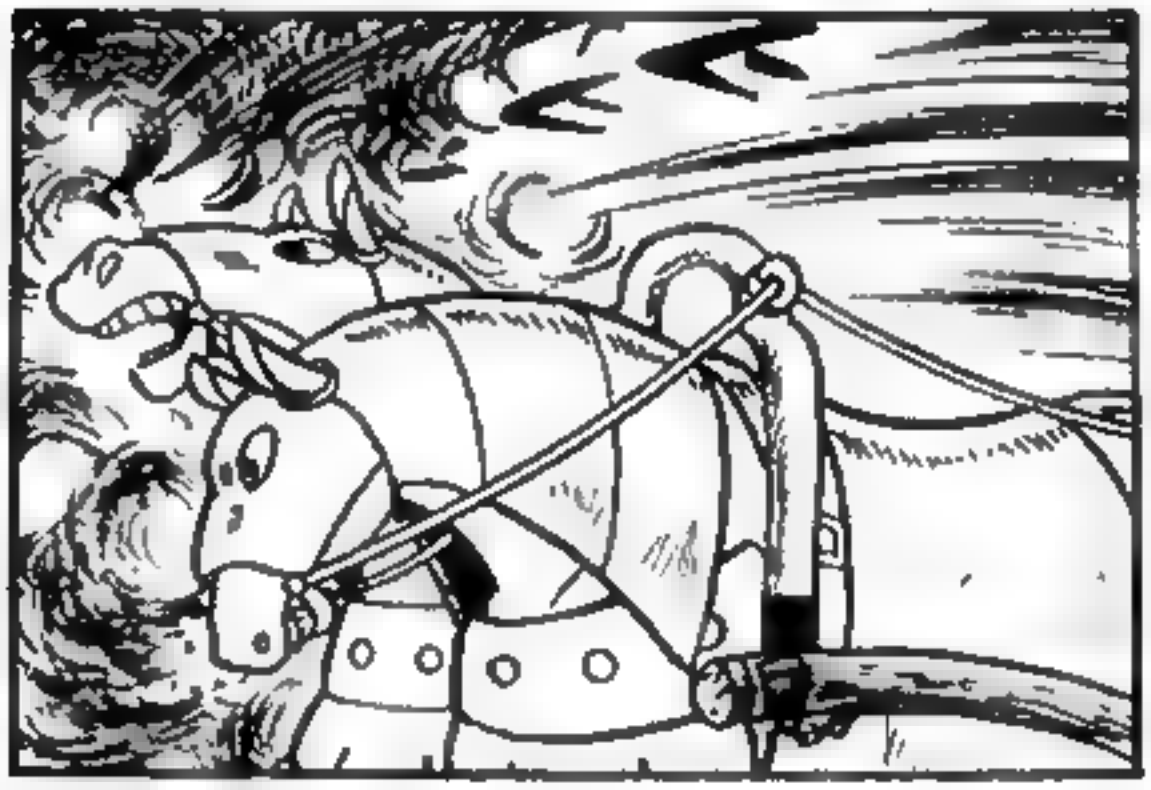


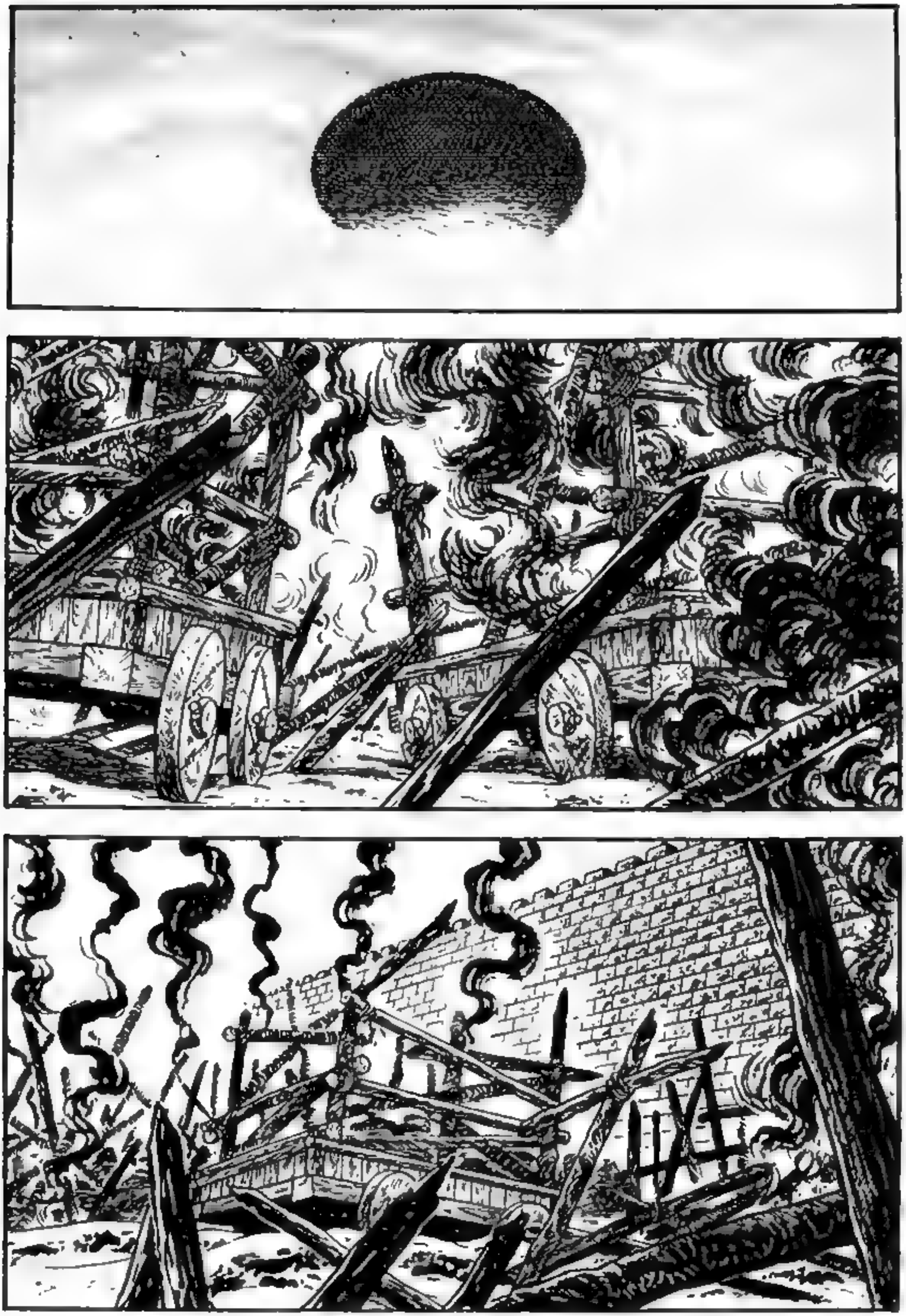
AHH!

HOT!

AGHHH!

GET DOWN!
AHHH!





LET'S SWITCH TO A TUNNEL-DIGGING OPERATION.

WE MUST CHANGE PLANS THEN...

OUR TOWERS WERE ALSO BURNT DOWN, SIR.

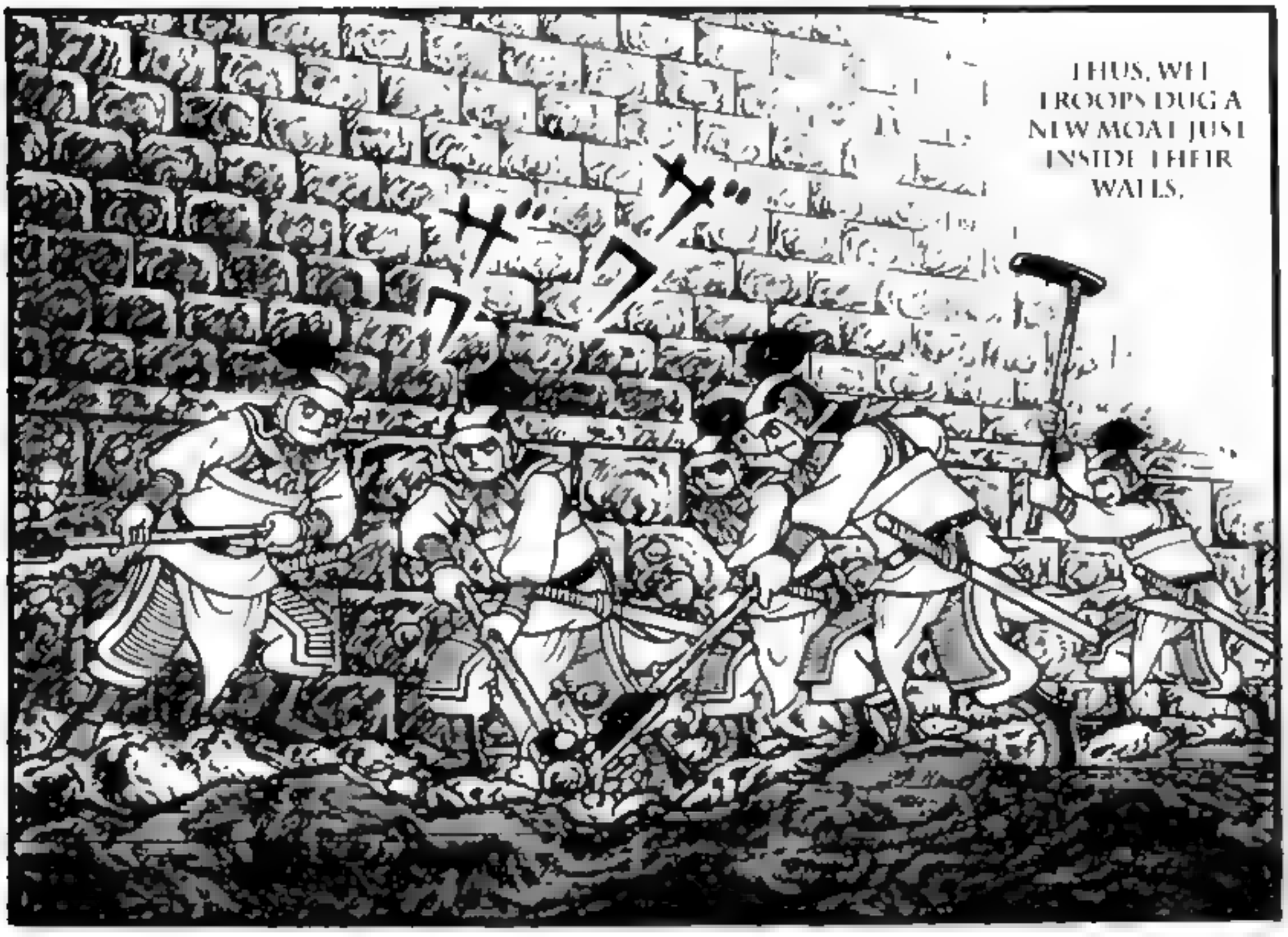
YES, SIR.

ASSIGN TROOPS TO DIG UNDER THE WALLS AT ONCE!

WHAT!?
IT APPEARS THE ENEMIES HAVE BEGUN DIGGING TUNNELS TO GET INSIDE THE CITY, SIR.

FROM WHERE?

FROM OVER THERE, SIR.
WE WILL?
WE WILL DIG A TRENCH JUST INSIDE OUR WALLS.
HMM, WHICH ROUTE WILL THEIR TUNNEL TAKE...
AH, NOW I UNDERSTAND. I WILL CARRY OUT THE PLAN AT ONCE, GENERAL.
YES, AND ONCE THAT'S DONE, FILL IT WITH WATER AND SEAL IT OFF. THAT WAY, ANY ENEMY TUNNEL LEADING UNDER OUR WALLS WILL INTERSECT THIS NEW TRENCH AND BE FLOODED.


THUS, WH
TROOPS DUG A
NEW MOAT JUST
INSIDE THEIR
WALLS.

AND FILLED IT
TO THE BRIM
WITH WATER

AND JUST WHEN THEY DUG UNDER THE WALLS

MEANWHILE, SHU TROOPS CONTINUED DIGGING THEIR TUNNEL WITHOUT ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE NEW MOAT

THEY WERE GREETED BY A TORRENT OF WATER, DROWNING THEM INSTANTLY

THUS EVEN AFTER 20 DAYS, THE OUTNUMBERED GARRISON AT CHENCANG MANAGED TO HOLD THE VAST SHU FORCES AT BAY NEVER BEFORE HAD KONGMING ENCOUNTERED SO MUCH DIFFICULTY IN CAPTURING A SINGLE FORT.
JUST THEN, A MESSENGER URGENTLY RODE FOR THE SHU CAMPS

YES, IT'S A FORCE OF 20,000 AND LED BY A MAN NAMED WANG SHUANG.

THE VANGUARD OF THE WEI FORCES HAVE BEEN SIGHTED ALREADY!?

YES?

YES?

XIE XIONG. GONG QI.

YES, SIR.

TAKE 3000 TROOPS EACH AND DELAY THE ENEMY VANGUARD FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

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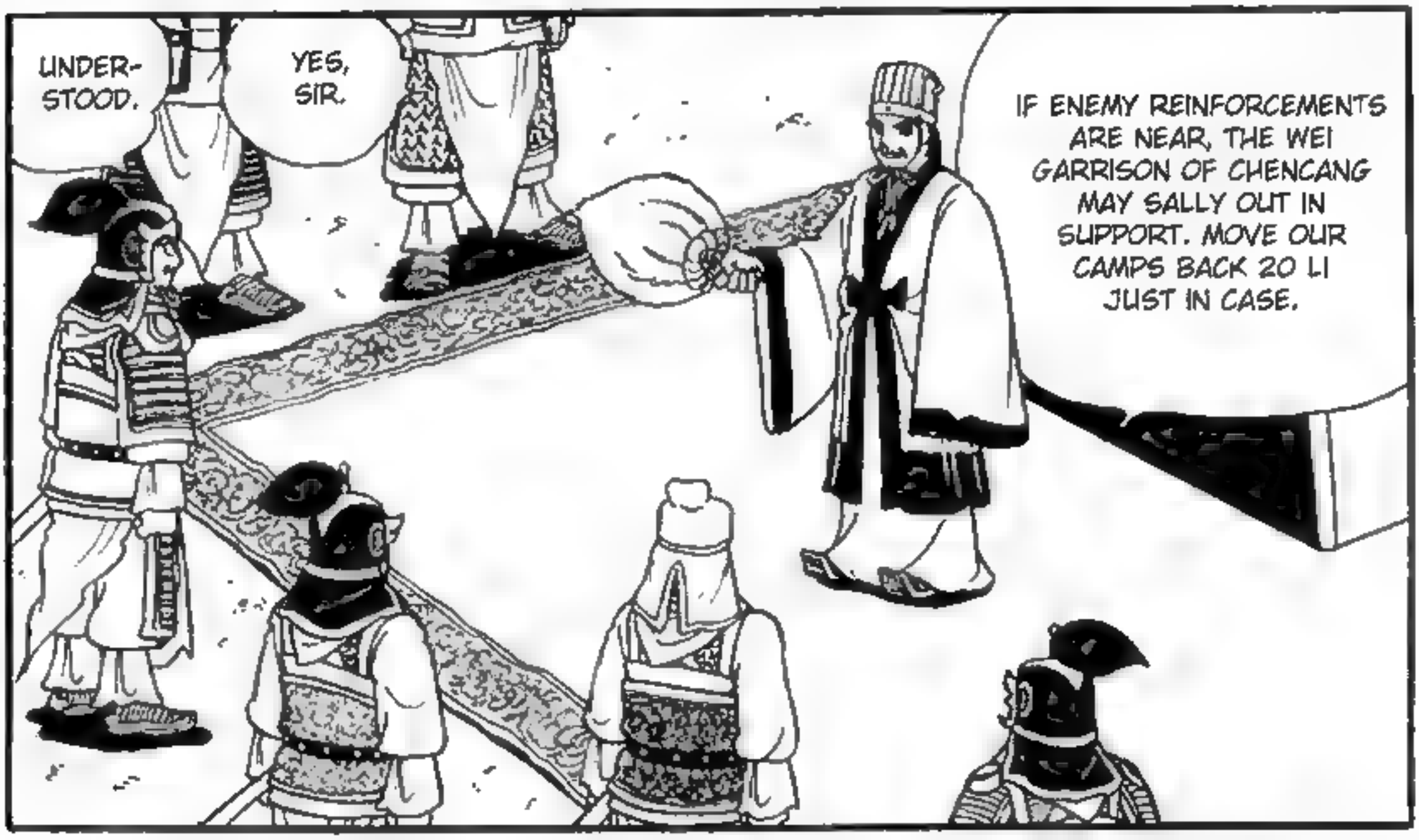
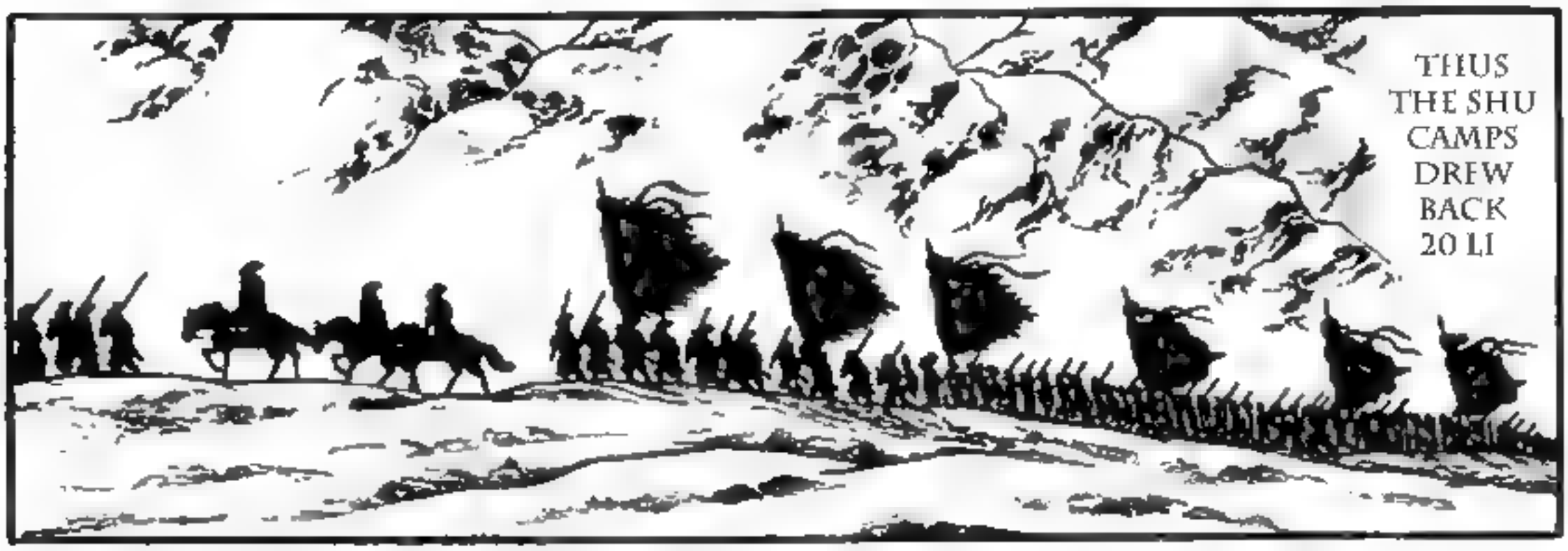

UNDER-STOOD.
YES, SIR.
IF ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS ARE NEAR, THE WEI GARRISON OF CHENCANG MAY SALLY OUT IN SUPPORT. MOVE OUR CAMPS BACK 20 LI JUST IN CASE.


THUS THE SHU CAMPS DREW BACK 20 LI

MIGHTY WANG SHUANG

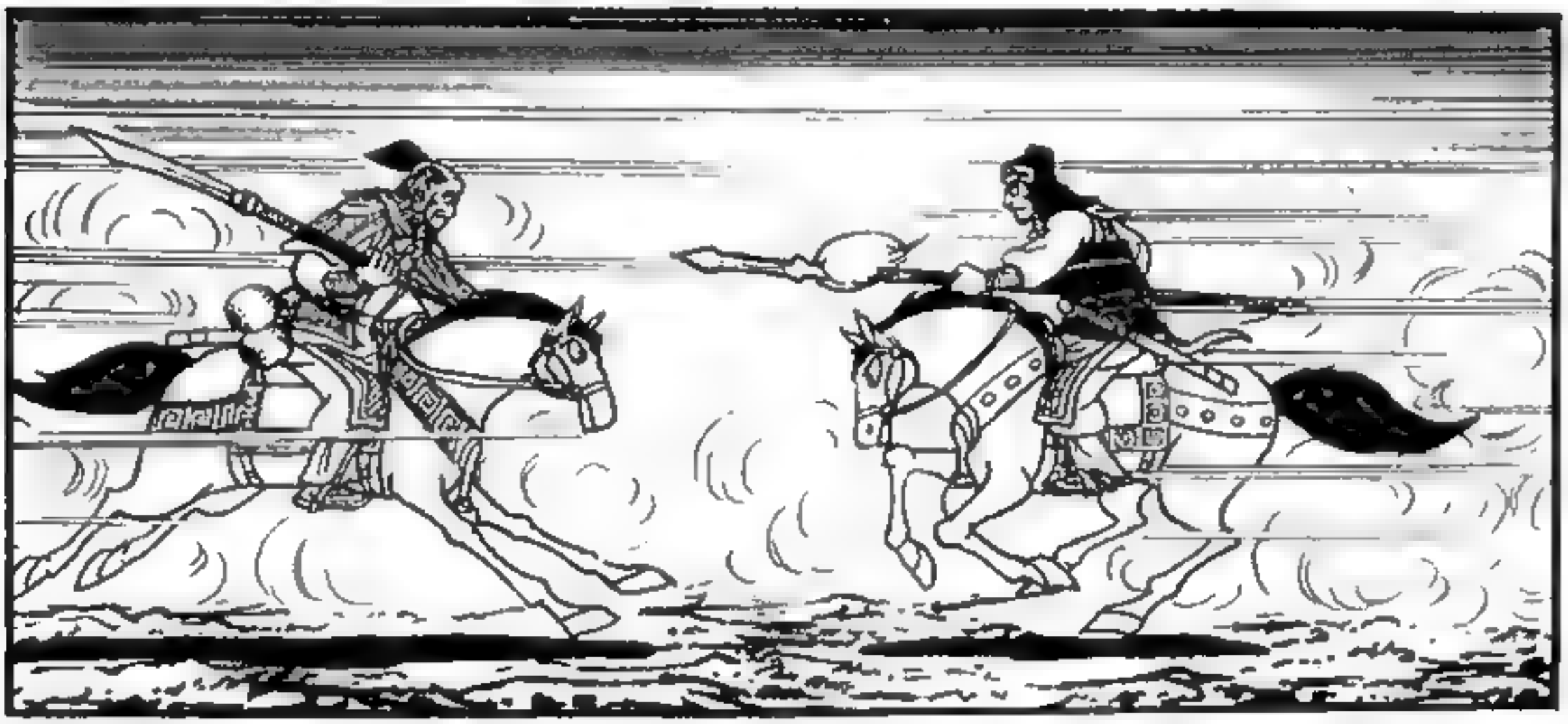
ATTACK!

CHARGE!

AH, THE ENEMIES HAVE COME TO BATTLE!

THAT WOULD BE ME, XIE XIONG!

WHO IS YOUR LEADER!? THIS IS WANG SHUANG, THE WEI VANGUARD LEADER!

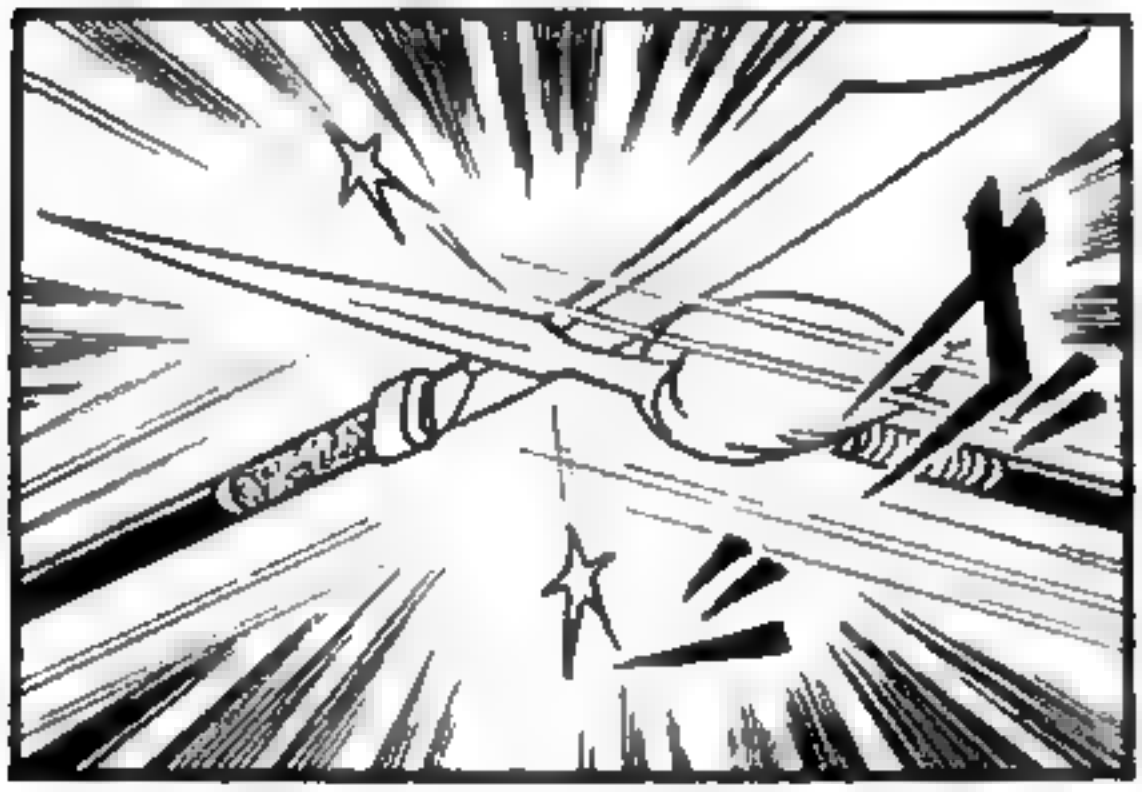


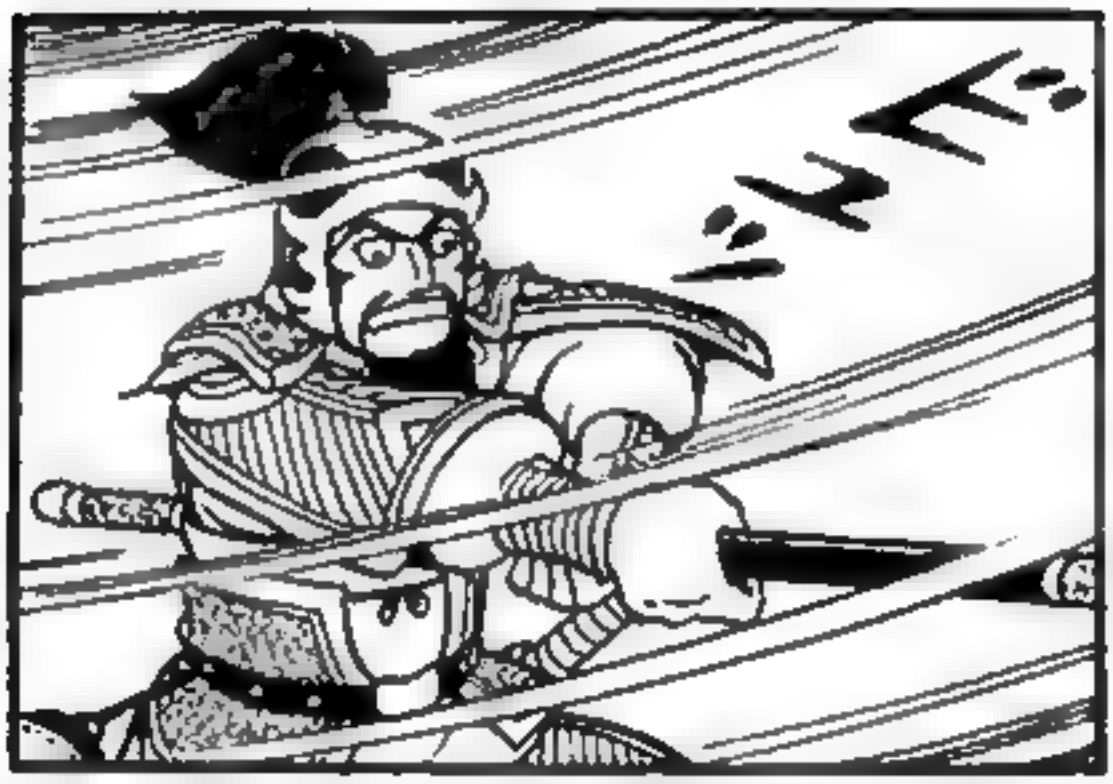
I'M SURPRISED YOU MANAGED TO BECOME A GENERAL WITH SUCH LOWLY SKILLS.

LET ME SHOW YOU HOW TO FIGHT!

GONG QI WILL AVENGE YOUR DEATH!

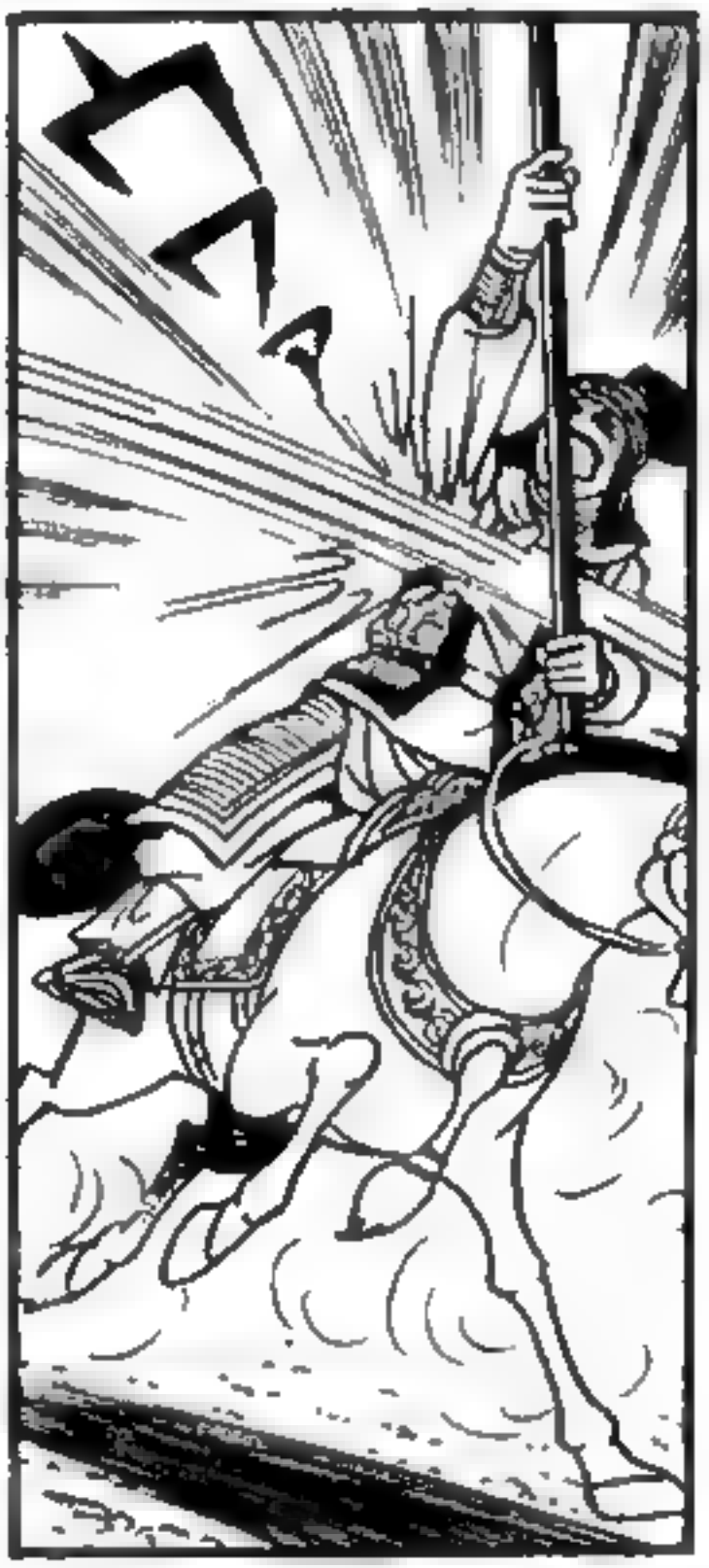
AHH! XIE XIONG!



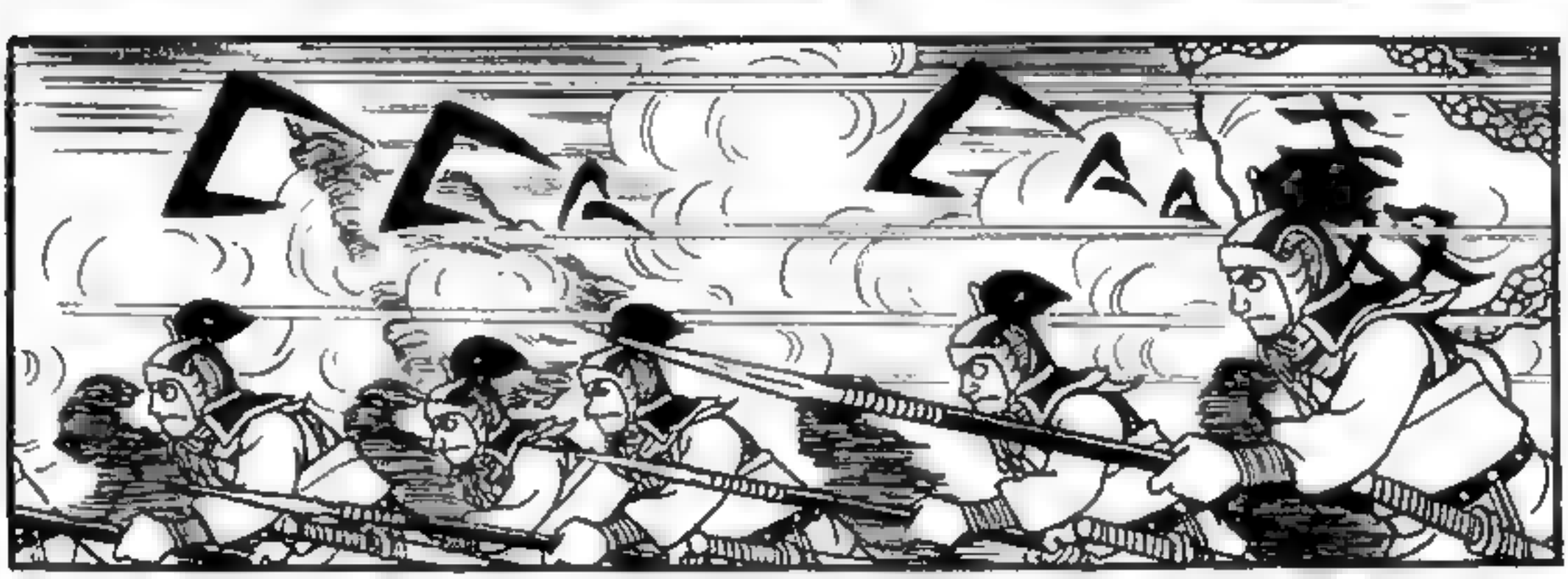


DOESN'T SHU HAVE ANY CAPABLE FIGHTERS?

OH NO!
OUR GENERAL HAS FALLEN!



COME, MEN! RUN OVER THESE COWARDS!



RUN!

AGHH!

蜀 蜀 蜀 蜀

YES, THEY WERE CUT DOWN IN A SINGLE BLOW AND OUR PANICKED TROOPS SOON FLED.

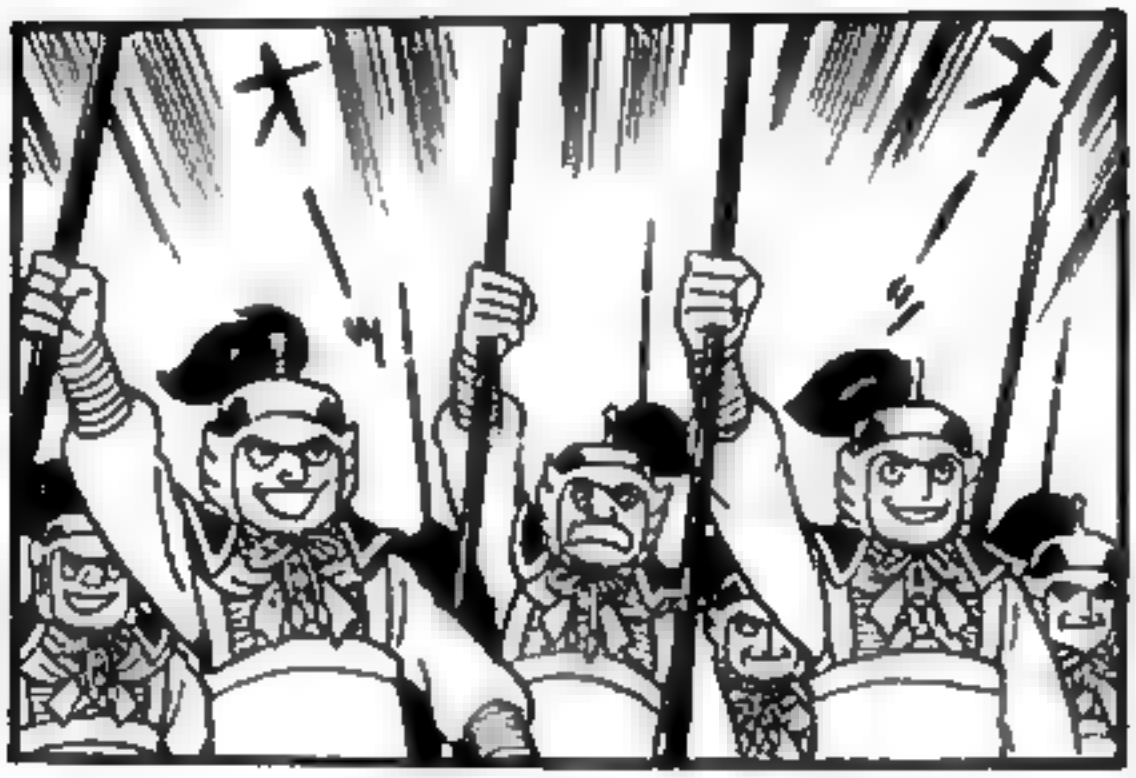
WHAT!? BOTH XIE XIONG AND GONG QI WERE SLAIN!?

WANG PING, ZHANG NI, LIAO HUA.

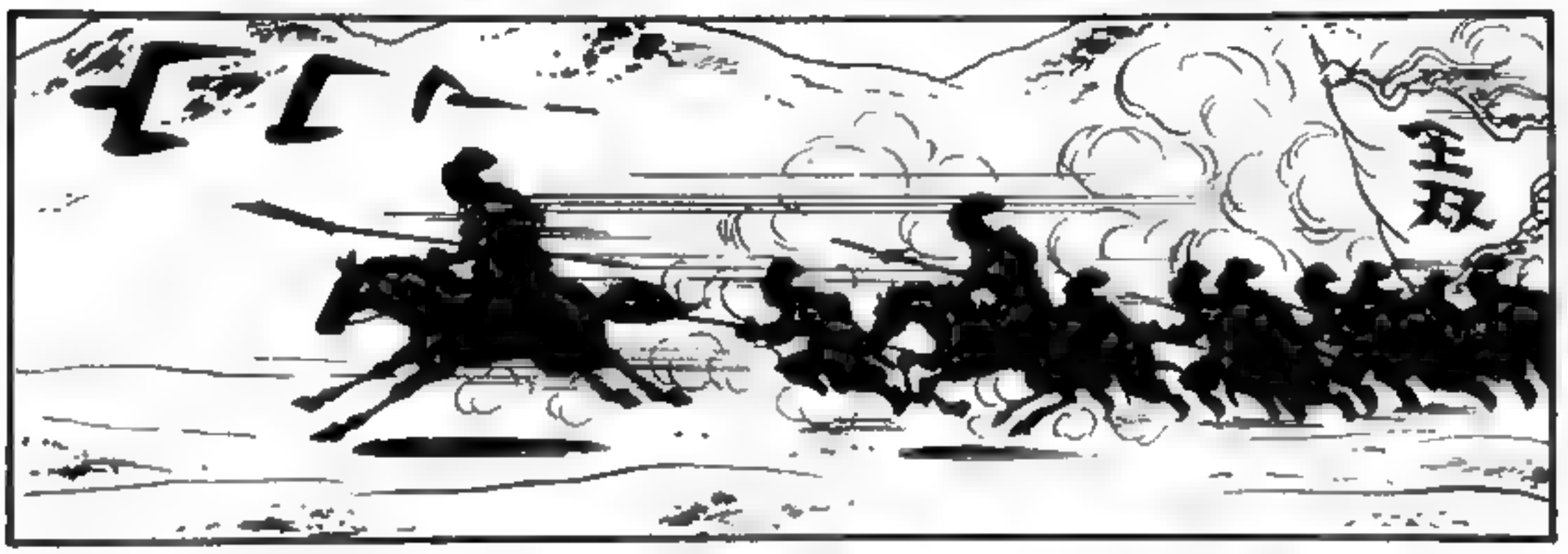
IF THE REINFORCE-MENTS REACH CHENCANG, THEN THIS SIEGE WILL END IN FAILURE...

AT YOUR COMMAND.
HERE, SIR.
YES?
YES, SIR.
YOU THREE ARE TO LEAVE CAMP TO DELAY THE WEI VANGUARD FROM REACHING CHENCANG AS LONG AS POSSIBLE WHILE OUR FORCES HERE TRY TO WRAP UP THE SIEGE.

HAHA, SO THE ENEMIES HAVEN'T BEEN WHIPPED AROUND ENOUGH, HMM?



IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER STOMPING, MEN!



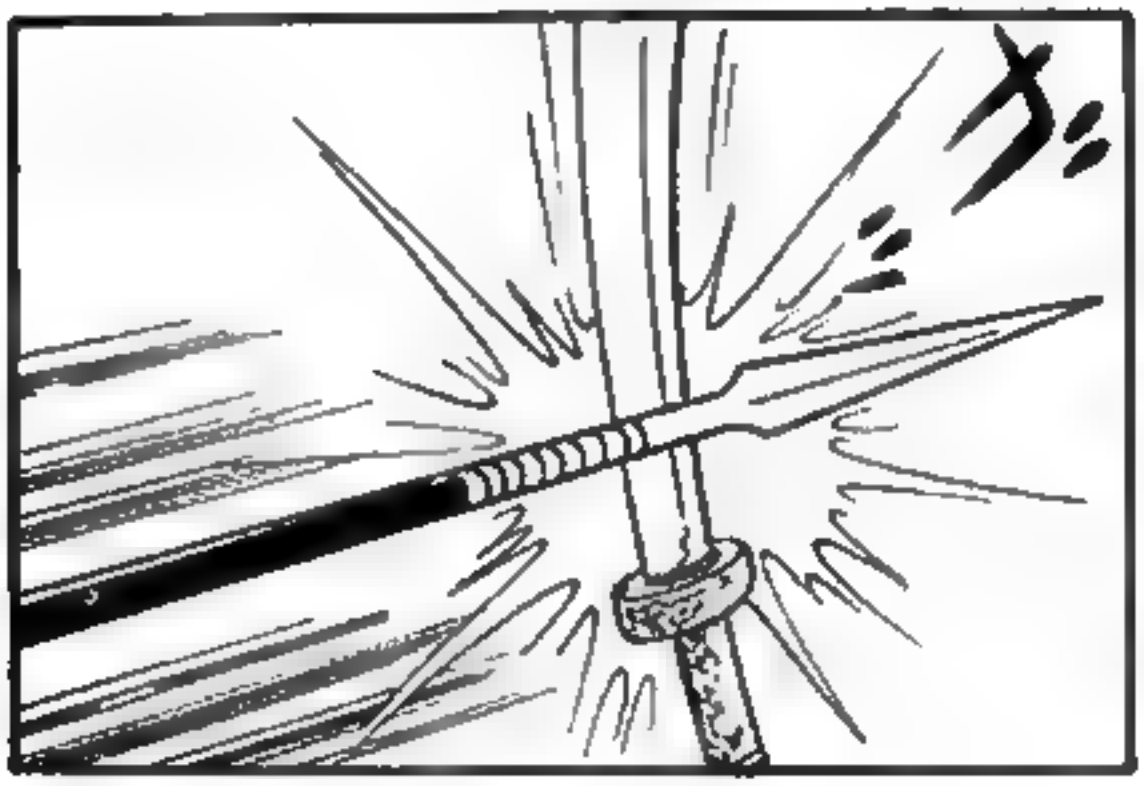
ATTACK!

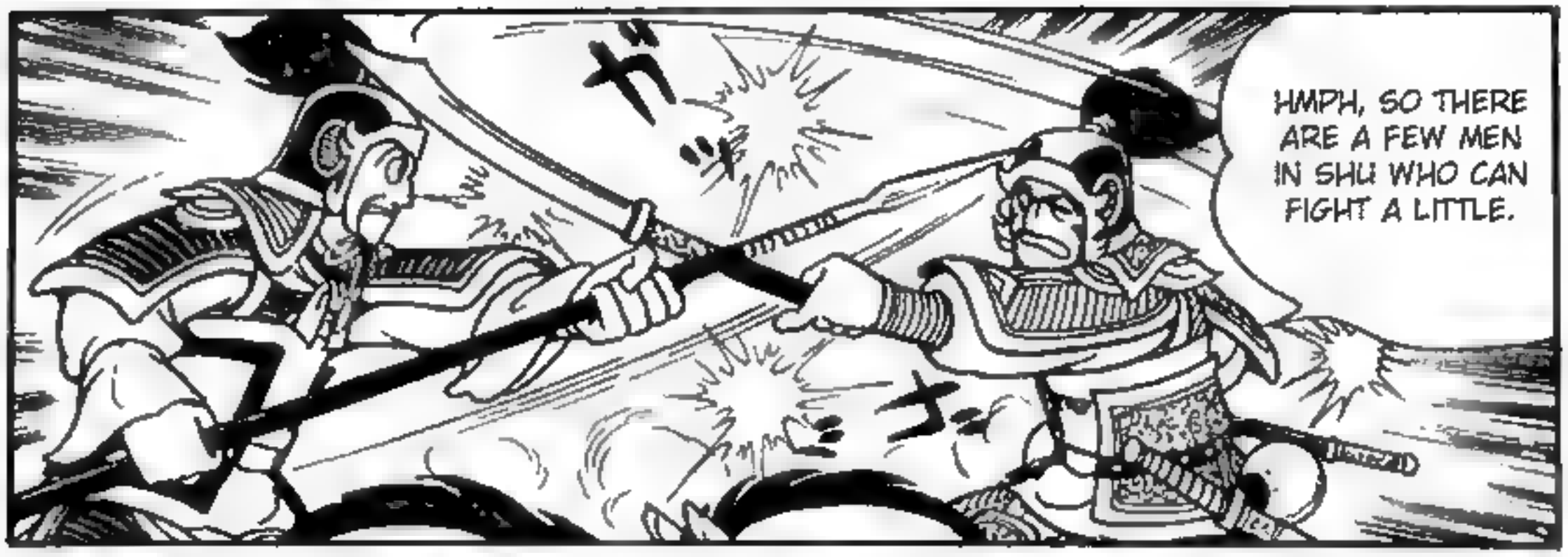
ATTACK!

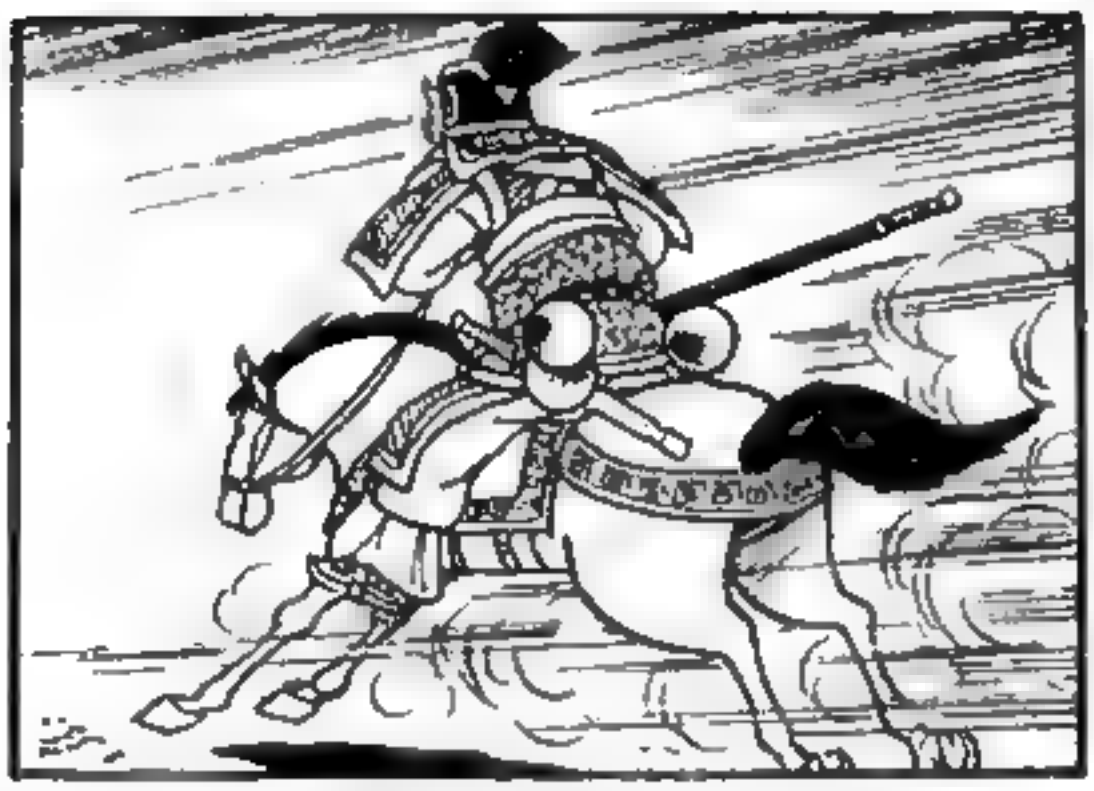
ATTACK!

I, ZHANG NI, WILL TAKE YOU ON!

WHO ARE THE LEADERS!? FIGHT ME IF YOU DARE!

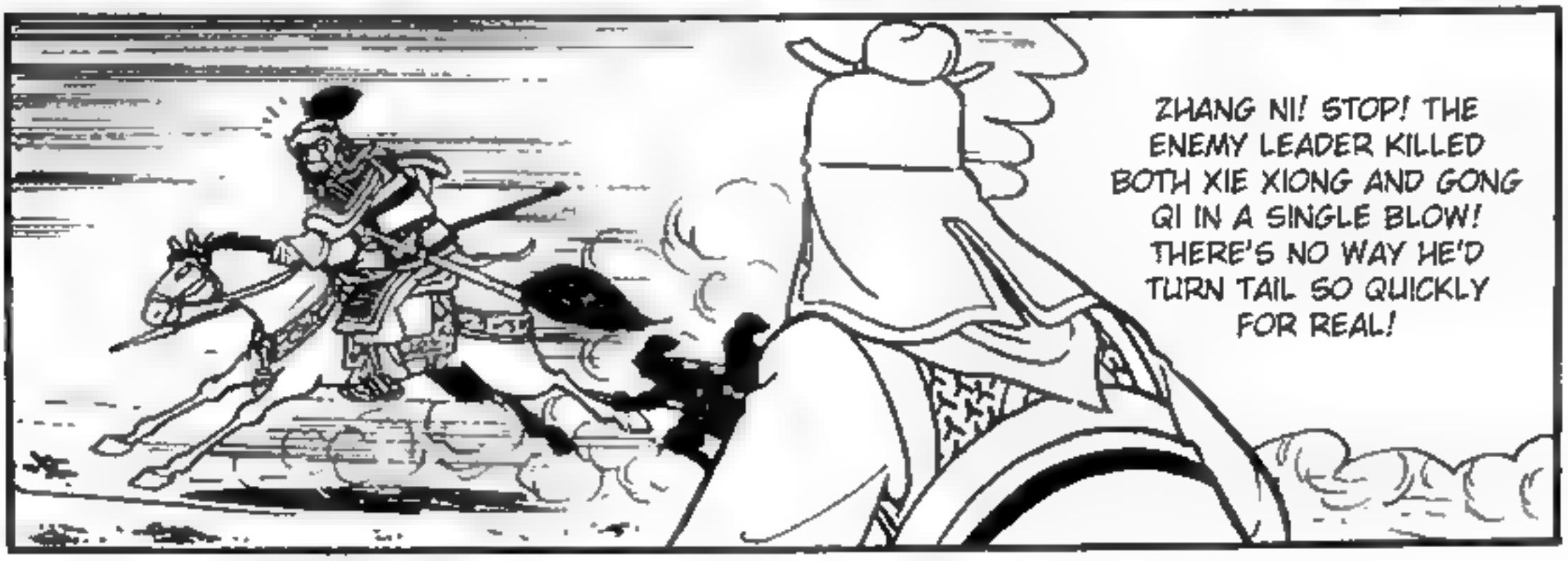


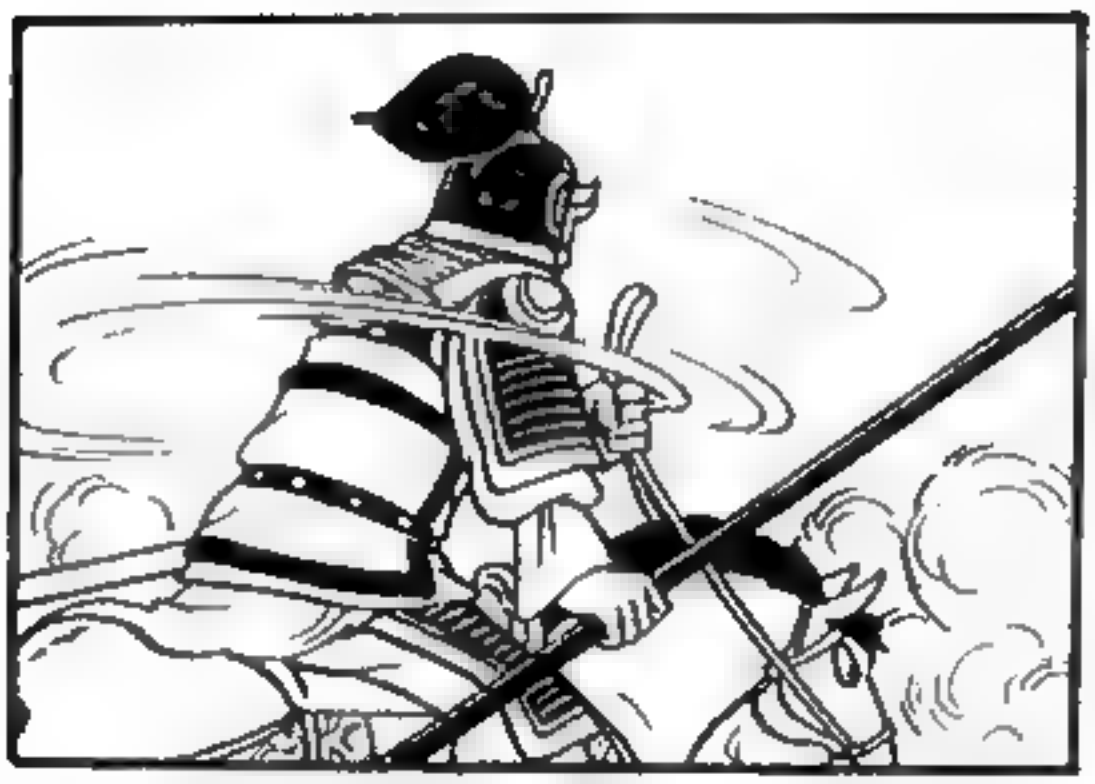

HMPH, SO THERE ARE A FEW MEN IN SHU WHO CAN FIGHT A LITTLE.



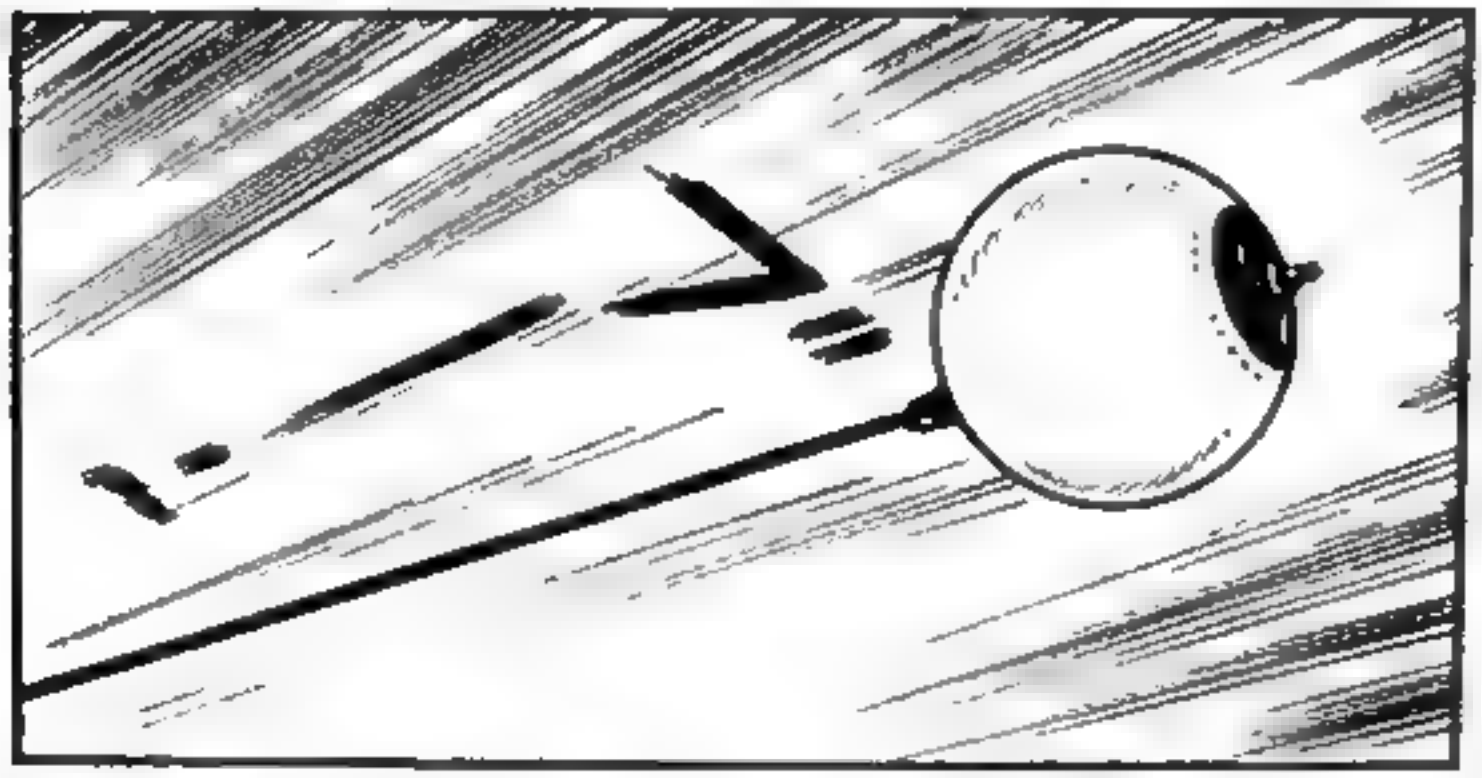
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THAT BOASTING EARLIER!?

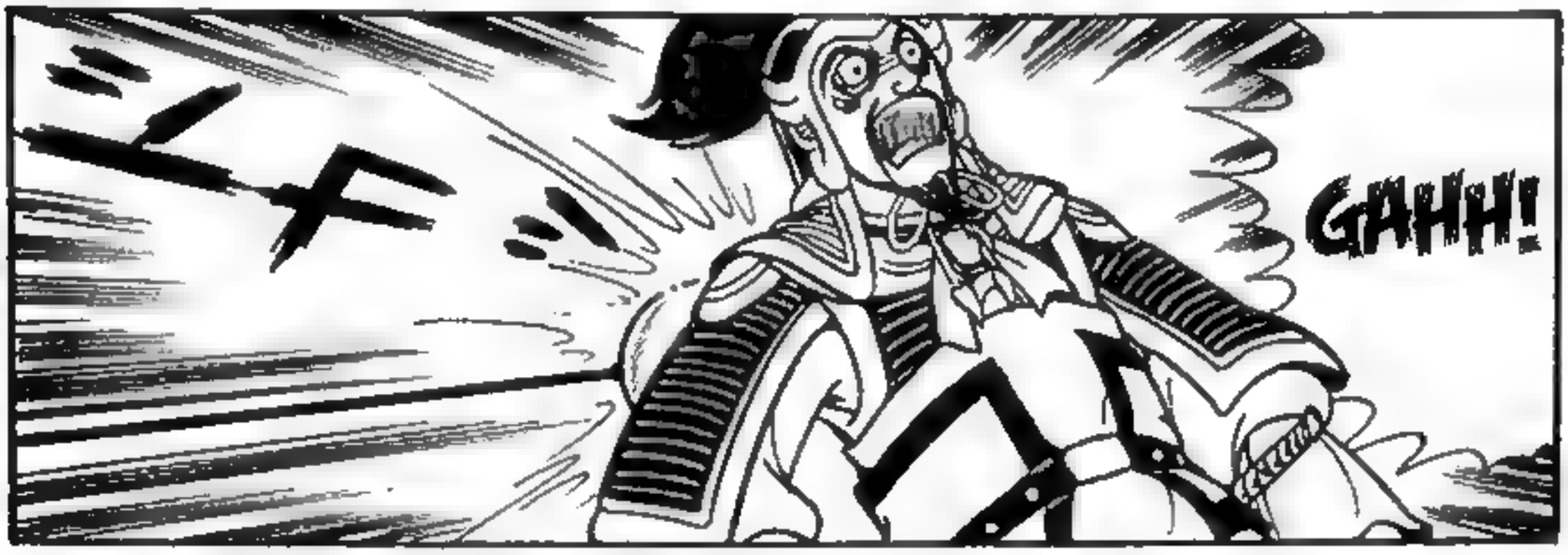
RUNNING AWAY!?

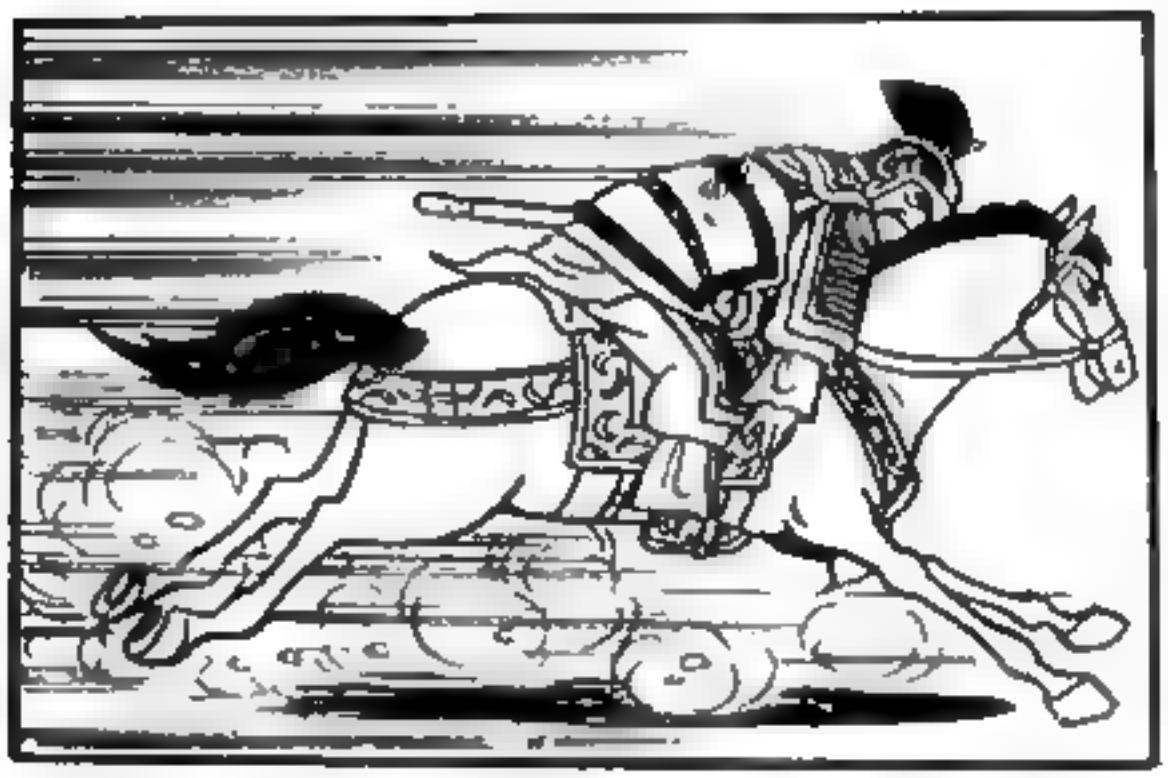

ZHANG NI! STOP! THE ENEMY LEADER KILLED BOTH XIE XIONG AND GONG QI IN A SINGLE BLOW! THERE'S NO WAY HE'D TURN TAIL SO QUICKLY FOR REAL!



YOU'RE RIGHT. THANK YOU, WANG PING.




GAHH!



ZHANG NI!

RETREAT! RETREAT!

HANG IN THERE!

THE ENEMIES ARE FLEEING! CHASE THEM DOWN!
HAVING QUICKLY DISPATCHED XIE XIONG, GONG QI, AND NOW ZHANG NI, THE WEI VANGUARD LED BY WANG SHUANG STORMED IN LIKE A FORCE OF NATURE.

TO QISHAN HILLS AGAIN

THEY'VE UNFORTUNATELY MADE CONTACT WITH THE GARRISON AT CHENCANG AND HAVE CAMPED JUST OUTSIDE.

THEN WHERE IS THE WEI VANGUARD NOW?

THEN CHENCANG GARRISON'S MORALE MUST HAVE SOARED HIGHER THAN EVER...

FIRST THINGS FIRST. I MUST GO SEE HOW THEY'VE SET UP CAMPS.

HM...
OVER THERE, COMMANDER.

IF WE ATTACK THAT CAMP, CHENCANG'S GARRISON WILL SALLY OUT TO ATTACK OUR FLANK. IF WE ASSAULT CHENCANG, THEN THE ENEMY VANGUARD WILL SALLY FORTH AND STRIKE OUR REAR...

A FORMIDABLE SET-UP, INDEED.

AND IF WE DO NOTHING, THEN THE MAIN ENEMY FORCE WILL SOON ARRIVE...

PLEASE TRY TO LIGHTEN UP, SIR.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE TOO FIXATED ON CHENCANG, SIR.

YES, I KNOW I'M TOO STRESSED OUT FOR MY OWN GOOD, BUT IT FRUSTRATES ME SO TO SEE THIS ENTIRE CAMPAIGN GROUND DOWN TO A HALT BECAUSE OF A SINGLE FORT...

YES, SIR.

IT SEEMS YOU HAVE AN IDEA. PLEASE SHARE IT WITH ME.

TOO FIXATED?

BY OVERLY FIXATING ON CHENCANG, YOUR ACTIONS ARE BECOMING PREDICTABLE TO THE ENEMIES, SIR.

KEEPING AWAY?

I BELIEVE KEEPING AWAY IS AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IN WAR.

YES! KEEPING AWAY! ONE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THE VALUE IN KEEPING AWAY!

AH!

YES, SIR.

CALL WEI YAN, WANG PING, AND LI HUI AT ONCE!

I AM HONOURED THAT YOU FOUND MY ADVICE USEFUL.

THANK YOU FOR OPENING MY EYES, JIANG WEI. MY PRIDE MADE ME TOO STUBBORN, FOR I HAD NEVER HAD SO MUCH DIFFICULTY IN CAPTURING A SINGLE FORT.

YES, COME CLOSER.

DID YOU CALL FOR US, SIR?

UNDER-STOOD

WEI YAN, SET UP A DEFENSIVE POSITION IN THE VALLEYS OF CHENCANG AND BLOCK OFF ALL ENEMIES FROM CHENCANG.

YES, SIR.
WANG PING AND LI HUI. YOU TWO ARE TO BLOCK OFF THE ROAD TO JIETING AND SEE THAT NO TROOPS FROM JIETING GET THROUGH.
YES, SIR.
AS FOR MYSELF, I WILL LEAD OUR MAIN ARMY AND HEAD TO QISHAN HILLS.

THAT NIGHT, THE MAIN SHU ARMY COMMANDED BY KONGMING AND ASSISTED BY MA DAI, GUAN XING, ZHANG BAO, AND OTHER OFFICERS,

ABANDONED THE SIEGE OF CHENCANG AND HEADED TOWARDS QISHAN HILLS THROUGH THE YE GORGE

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CAO ZHEN'S CAMPS

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YES, OUR VANGUARD'S ARRIVAL AT CHENCANG HAS CAUSED ZHUGE LIANG TO ABANDON THE SIEGE AND HEAD FOR QISHAN HILLS.

WANG SHUANG ALREADY KILLED 2 SHU GENERALS AND BADLY INJURED ANOTHER!?

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

HE GAVE UP THE SIEGE AFTER ALL THE EFFORT SPENT ALREADY?

SO EVEN THE FAMOUS ZHUGE LIANG IS NOW BEGINNING TO SHOW HIS AGE AND STUMBLE! THE WAR THIS TIME IS LOOKING VERY BRIGHT FOR ME!

SIMA YI MAY HAVE TAKEN ALL THE CREDIT IN THE LAST CAMPAIGN, BUT IT'LL BE ME LAUGHING AT THE END OF THIS ONE!

HALT!

I...! I'M NO SPY, I SWEAR!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF!

YES, PLEASE LET ME SPEAK WITH THE COMMANDER.

URGENT?...

I COME TO INFORM THE WEI COMMANDER ABOUT AN URGENT MATTER.

PLEASE, SIR. I PROMISE THE COMMANDER WILL BE GREATLY INTERESTED.

HMM, I DON'T KNOW...

FINE, COME WITH ME.

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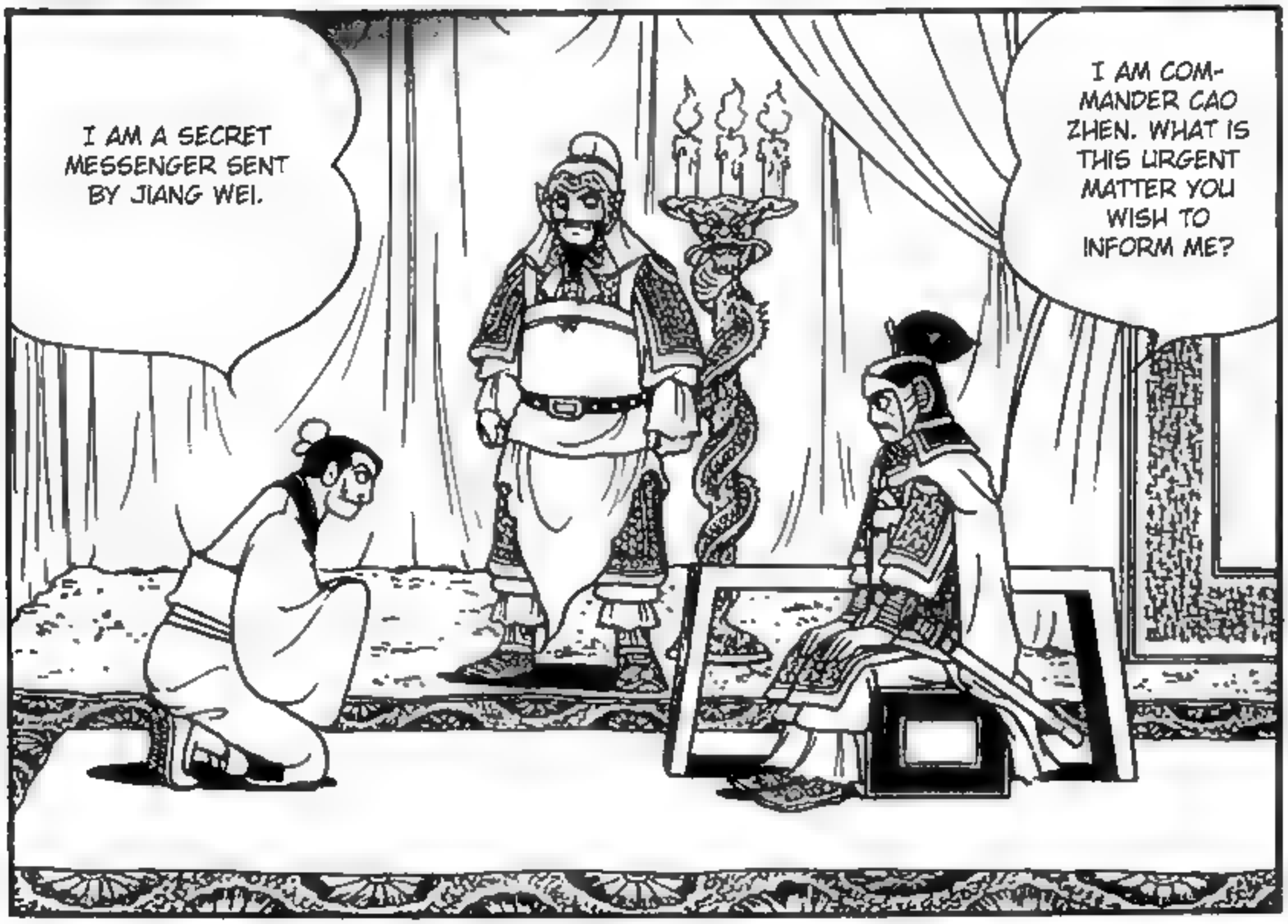
I AM A SECRET MESSENGER SENT BY JIANG WEI.
I AM COM-MANDER CAO ZHEN. WHAT IS THIS URGENT MATTER YOU WISH TO INFORM ME?

HE ASKED ME TO DELIVER THIS LETTER TO YOU, SIR.

JIANG WEI!? THAT TRAITOR!?

"I, JIANG WEI, THE GUILTY GENERAL, PROSTRATE 100 TIMES BEFORE YOU, COM-MANDER...."

HMM...

WHAT DID HE WRITE, SIR?

HMM...

IF I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT HIM BACK, HE WILL GLADLY BETRAY ZHUGE LIANG AND BRING A MERITABLE VICTORY.

HE SAYS THE ONLY REASON WHY HE DEFECTED TO SHU WAS BECAUSE ZHUGE LIANG TRICKED HIS SUPERIORS IN ORDER TO ISOLATE HIM. SINCE HE LONGS FOR HIS DEAR MOTHER IN TIANSHUI, HIS HEART STILL LIES WITH WEI.

HE SAYS HE CAN BURN THE SHU SUPPLY WAGONS.

AND EXACTLY HOW WILL HE DO THAT?

"PLEASE MEET THE SHU ARMY AND LURE THEM WITH A FEIGNED RETREAT SO AS TO BUY ME TIME TO BURN THE SHU SUPPLY WAGONS AT THEIR REAR. ONCE YOU SEE FIRE SMOKES RISING UP FROM BEHIND THE SHU ARMY, THAT WILL BE THE SIGNAL FOR SIR TO TURN AROUND AND ATTACK THEM FROM THE FRONT WHILE I STRIKE THEIR REAR. THIS WAY, WE WILL SURROUND THE SHU ARMY AND CAPTURE ZHUGE LIANG."

YES, SIR.

THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING THIS LETTER. TELL JIANG WEI I WILL GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO REDEEM HIMSELF WITH HIS PROPOSED PLAN.

THIS IS VERY GOOD NEWS. IF THEIR SUPPLIES ARE BURNT IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER, THEIR NUMBERS WILL WORK AGAINST THEM AS THEY SOON STARVE TO DEATH.

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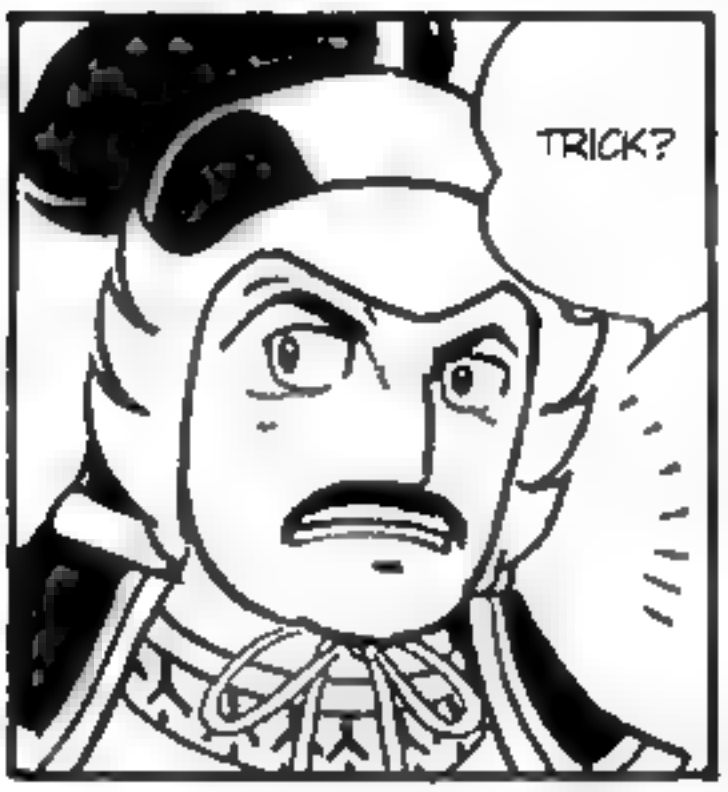

TRICK?

COMMANDER, COULD THIS NOT BE ANOTHER ONE OF ZHUGE LIANG'S TRICKS?
HAHAHA! THIS WAR'S AS GOOD AS WON NOW!

I DON'T THINK SO. JIANG WEI'S FAMOUS FOR HIS CONCERN FOR HIS MOTHER.

BUT WHAT IF THIS WERE TRUE?

BUT ZHUGE LIANG'S CUNNING KNOWS NO LIMITS, SIR.

THEN AT LEAST, I URGE YOU TO REMAIN HERE AT THE CAMP WHILE I GO TO MEET WITH JIANG WEI IN YOUR STEAD.

TRUE...

IF SO, WE WOULD BE IGNORING THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME! MISSING A CERTAIN VICTORY!

HMM...

IF THE PLAN SUCCEEDS, YOU MAY CLAIM ALL THE CREDIT. IF JIANG WEI IS LYING, I WILL TAKE CARE OF THE SITUATION.

THANK YOU, COMMANDER.

VERY WELL, FEI YAO. I GRANT YOU 50,000 TROOPS FOR THIS MISSION.

THUS, THE WEI
GENERAL FEI YAO
LED 50 000 TROOPS
THROUGH THE YE
GORGE TO HEAD
FOR QISHAN HILLS

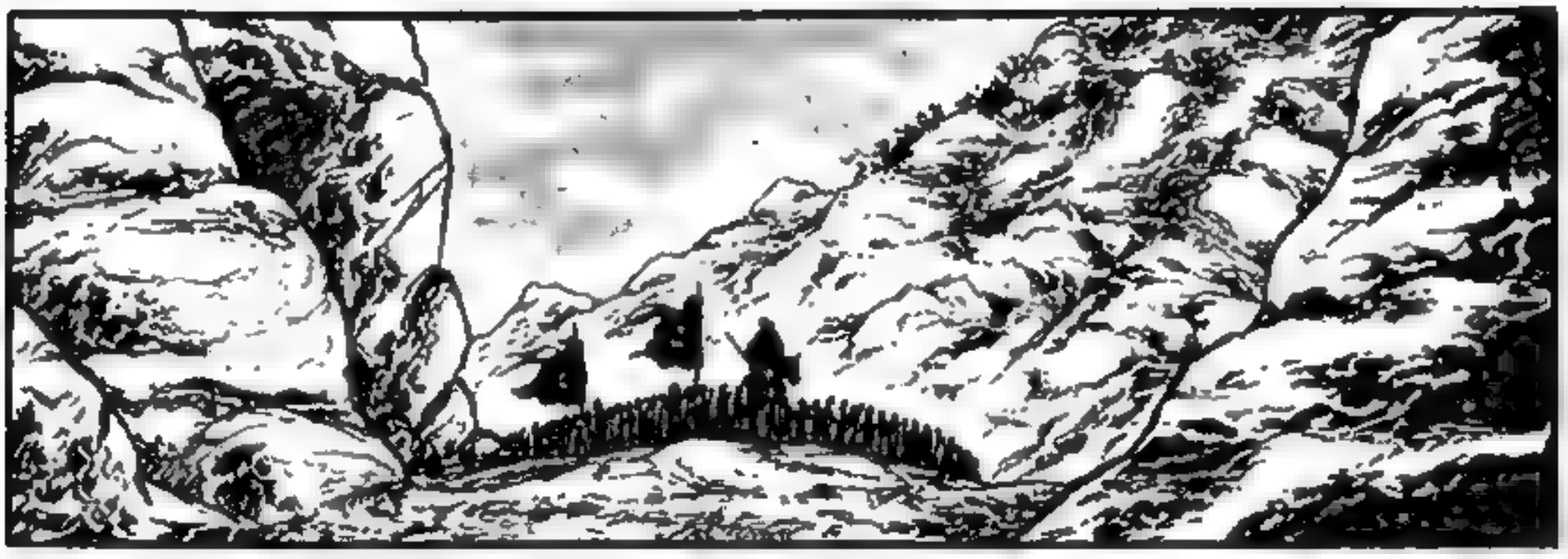
SIR!

NO, THEY SEEM LIKE A SMALL DETACHED CONTINGENT, SIR.

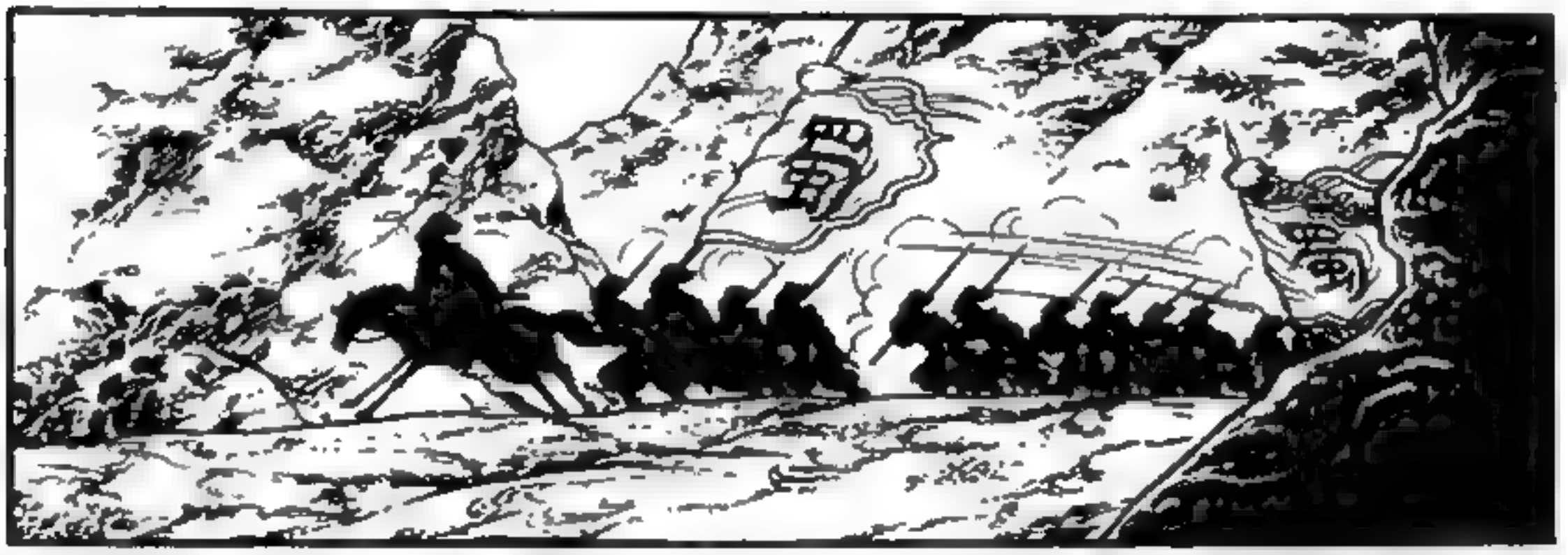
IS IT A LARGE ARMY?

SHU TROOPS ARE JUST UP AHEAD!

THEN WE WILL WIPE THEM OUT!



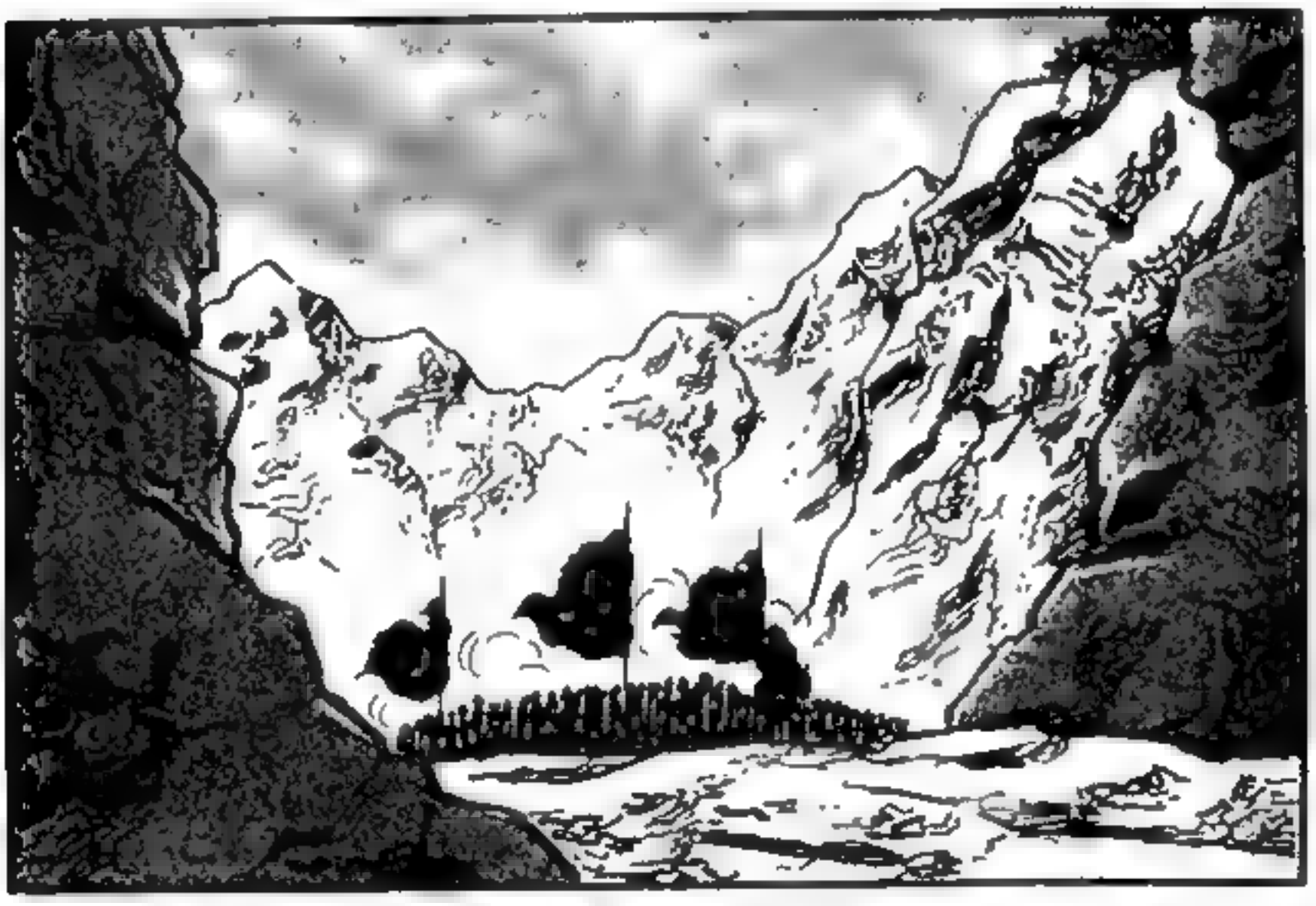
RETREAT!
RETREAT!
WHA!
AHH!



STOP AND FIGHT, COWARDS!

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN PANICKED BY THE SIGHT OF OUR NUMBERS.
HMPH, DAMN COWARDS DIDN'T EVEN PUT UP THE SLIGHTEST RESISTANCE!

IN ANY CASE, DON'T LET YOUR GUARDS DOWN!



AH!

ATTACK!

ANOTHER SHU FORCE!

AGHHH!
IT'S A LARGE WEI ARMY! RETREAT!
蜀

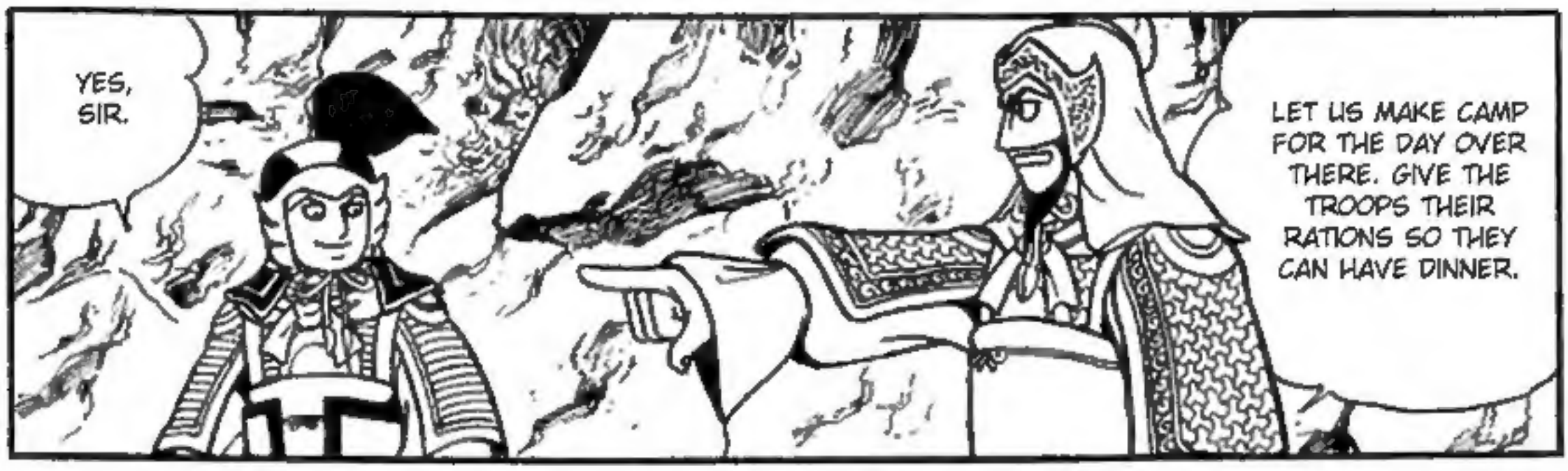
HM?

ENEMIES?

PERHAPS COMMANDER CAO ZHEN WAS RIGHT WHEN HE SAID ZHUGE LIANG WAS STUMBLING TOO MUCH, AS HIS TROOPS CLEARLY SEEM TO BE AFFECTED BY IT.

AGAIN!? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THEIR MORALE?

RIGHT.
THE SUN IS BEGINNING TO SET, GENERAL FEI YAO.


YES, SIR.
LET US MAKE CAMP FOR THE DAY OVER THERE. GIVE THE TROOPS THEIR RATIONS SO THEY CAN HAVE DINNER.

AS THE WEI ARMY MADE CAMP, A SINGLE MAN QUIETLY SMILED TO HIMSELF FROM AFAR. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS MAN WAS ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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三国志

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横山 光輝

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